

Wisdom from Above :

O R,
Considerations
A N D
REFLECTIONS

Tending to Explain, Establish and
Promote the
CHRISTIAN LIFE;

O R
That *Holiness, without which
no Man shall see the Lord.*

Selected out of the more studied Sermons and
Discourses of some of the most learned and
judicious Writers of this Age.

P A R T II.

By a Lover of TRUTH, and of
the SOULS of MEN.

*But the Wisdom that is from Above, is first pure,
then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated,
full of Mercy, and of good Fruits; without Parti-
ality, and without Hypocrisy. Jam. iii. 7.*

The THIRD EDITION Corrected.

L O N D O N:

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TO THE
READER.

THIS *Second Part of the* Considerations tending to promote the Christian Life, &c. is owing, in a good Measure, to the very useful and judicious Discourses of the late most Reverend Archbishop of York, Dr. Sharpe, and of some few other Divines of our Communion; all of them eminent in their respective Stations; as well as truly placed amongst the most celebrated

iv To the READER.

WRITERS of this Nation, and of this Age. They who are conversant in these Matters, will soon know their Names; and others, as the Folly of Party and Faction now runs, in the weaker especially, and the worst, as well as hotter Heads of too many, had as good content themselves with their Characters, and the Advantage they may this way receive from them, if they please.

It cannot be doubted, but that these pious and learned Men, were they yet among us, would be well pleased to find those important Truths of the Christian Religion, which they had so well considered, stated, and proved, with all that Force and Clearness

To the READER. v

ness of Reason and Eloquence, (of which they were so great Masters) this way made serviceable to those many (it is hoped) who have neither Money to purchase, nor Leisure to read their Works, must have been otherwise deprived of so great Benefits as they design'd to Posterity, as well as to their own Times.

The attentive Reader will find, that in this, and in the former Part of the Considerations, &c. he hath in a small Compass, and at an easy Rate, some of the most Studied, and well-digested Thoughts, Explications, and Decisions, or Counsels, of several eminently pious and judicious Writers, about the most weighty and indispensable

vi To the READER.

Truths and Duties of our Holy Religion.

They are at least such as seemed to the Publisher of them in this Form, some of the most Generally Useful, that is, the most needful Instructions, the most affecting and moving, or awakening and convincing Observations and Remarks, which he made in more than an Hundred Printed Sermons and Discourses of some of the most learned and best esteemed Authors of this Age in our Church and Nation, and of some few Foreigners also.

And that these may the more fully conduce, to his farther Instruction, or Improvement in his greatest Concern, that of
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To the READER. vii

his eternal Welfare, it may be fit to remind the Reader, that in Things of this Kind, in which a great deal is proposed to be said in few Words, each PARAGRAPH should be read over twice or oftner; and made his own by some short Reflection thereon; and by a Conscientious APPLICATION, where there is Occasion for it, to his own Circumstances, and the more particular CONCERN he may have therein. Since two or three of these Paragraphs sometimes are the Drift, and the Summary of a set Discourse of some wise and good Author.

By this Means, a serious Christian may, with the Blessing of God, reap that true Ad-

viii To the READER.

vantage from this way of retailing such valuable Notions and Observations; which he will never gain, even from those larger Discourses, in a slight and hasty Perusal of them.

However, the Publisher doth not think he needs make any Excuse for thus endeavouring to promote the Honour of our Great Lord and Master; and to make his thinking, serious, and considerate Reader, in some Measure a wiser and a better Man than he was before.

Wisdom



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P A R T II.

[ T will be of *great Use*,
in Order to the obtain-
ing that *Purity* of Heart
and *Holiness* of Life,
which the *Gospel* requires, to ac-
custom

custom our selves *to keep* a strict and constant *Watch* over the very *first Motions* of our Minds; and either to *approve*, or to *condemn*, and reject every *Thought* or *Imagination* as soon as ever it *arises* in our *Hearts*: That so we may nourish and encourage the good, and immediately discharge our Minds of any, either bad, or but unprofitable *Thoughts*.

This *Rule* carefully practised, would, by the Grace of God, *secure* us from all deliberate *wilful Sin*, by stifling the first *Tendencies* that *Way*: And it would also *preserve* us, not only from all *wicked*, but from all *vain, idle, useless Thoughts*; and from such foolish childish *Fancies*, as we should be *ashamed* of, could *Men* see into our *Hearts*, as Almighty *God* at all *Times doth*.

[We do neither *serve*, nor *please* God in any *Thing* we do; nor can we have any true *Faith*, or
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any *Hope*, nor *Trust* in him, unless we *love him* with that over-ruling *Love*, which makes us not only to *esteem* and value him as the *chiefest Good*, as our last End, or only true Happiness; but makes us also *study* to please him, and *to seek* his Favour with more *Concern*, and with more *Application*, than we do any other thing in the World.

In order to obtain this *Sovereign Love* of God, we must empty our Souls of all *carnal inordinate Love*; whether of our selves, or of any other Creature. We must often *meditate* upon the *Perfections* of the Divine Nature; and especially upon *God's Goodness* to us, in making us capable of knowing and serving Him; and in *reconciling* us, when we had *forfeited his Favour*, and were become his Enemies, by the *Death* of his dearly beloved *Son*. We must be daily *conversant* in the *Holy Scriptures*,

tures, which are a lively *Representation* of his transcendent *Excellencies*, and of his unspeakable *Love* to the Children of Men. We must *pray* incessantly and fervently for this *Grace*. And we must often *enquire* into our own Hearts what *Proficiency* we make therein; and *reproach* our selves that we *began so late*, and that we still *love him so little*, who being so infinitely *good* to us, ought to be *loved* by us in the *utmost* possible *Degree* we can by any Means attain to.

[*Charity*, in the Holy Scriptures, primarily denotes the *Love we bear to God* himself; and in a *secondary* Sense only, it signifies the *Good Will* we bear, and the *Good* we do to our poor Christian *Brethren*. If we bestowed all our Goods to *feed* them, without *this Charity*, or the *Love of God*, it would profit us nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 3. Whatever we can do toward the Relief of the

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the poor, is not a truly *Christian Act*, 'tis neither *acceptable* to God, nor will it *avail* any thing towards our own *Salvation*, unless it *proceeds* from our *Love to God*, and from a *Desire* to obey and to *please* Him.

Now, he who gives to the Poor upon *this* only true Christian *Motive*, viz. The *Love* of God, will *find himself* as certainly, and as *much obliged for*, or *by the same Reason*, to *contribute*, in Proportion to his *Ability* prudently stated, and to the *Opportunities* which offer, to any other *Proposal*, manifestly *tending* to the *Honour* and the *Glory of God*: Such are the *Erecting Charity-Schools* for the Instruction of poor *Children* in the Christian Religion; *Propagating the Gospel*, and *Promoting Christian Knowledge*, both at *Home* and *Abroad*: The *Building* and *Repairing of Churches*, &c. since a Man may by all these Ways *express* that *Love* he bears to his
God

God and Father, and to his Blessed Redeemer, as evidently and as *truly* in due Circumstances, as by *relieving* the Poor.

[Since nothing is more *certain* than *Death*, nor is any thing more *uncertain*, than the Time when we shall die : 'Tis the first and *chief Point* of *Wisdom*, to be *always* duly *prepared* for that which must *one Day* certainly *come*, and which may happen *any Hour* of any Man's Life.

'Tis therefore the *Height* of *Folly*, or rather *Madness*, not to be infinitely *careful* in so *weighty* a Matter, in *Comparison* with which, all *other Things* are *Trifles* : Since an *Error here*, can *never* be *amended*; and consequently will be *punished*, and sadly lamented to all *Eternity*.

The *best Thing* a Man can *propound* to himself as his continual *Study*, and *Endeavour* in this *World*, is a happy *Departure* out of it.

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[A well-instructed and well-resolved, that is, a truly *Christian Man*, would rather choose to *die* presently, than to *spend* his Days and his Nights in that which the sensual, *untinking* (whether the more *distinguished*, or the common) *Herd* of Mankind takes for an *happy* and a pleasant *Life*, viz. in such Set-Matches of *Deep Gaming*, or *Hard Drinking*, in leud *Plays*, and idle *Company*, which are the common *Occasion* of other very great *Sins* and *Disorders*.

And as little can such a Person *satisfy* himself in making a *Trade*, and a *constant* or chief *Business* (as too many do) of such *Sports* and Gentlemens *Recreations*, as can, in that unjustifiable *Excess*, serve to no other End, but to the *murdering* of so much of that *precious Time*, which God gave them to *worship* and to serve Himself in; and to *do good* to their *Christian Brethren*.

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Most foolish, and most miserable are these inconsiderate Men, who for such poor mean Trifles and Diversions neglect to *provide* for the Eternal *Happiness* of those *immortal*, but poor, wretched, *despised Souls* of theirs, which have *much less* of their *Time*, of their *Thoughts*, and of their *Care*, than their darling *Vices*; nay, than their *Dogs*, and their *Horses*.

For every wise and *thinking* Man cannot but plainly *see*, that such a *Course of Life*, thus wholly *spent* in making Provision for the *Flesh*, is not only infinitely *dangerous*, but indeed wholly *inconsistent* with all *Hopes of Happiness* in the other *World* upon the Terms of the *Gospel*.

[Those *Half-Christians* also, (if so much can be allow'd them) who *venture* the Salvation of their *Souls* chiefly upon a *negative Religion*; or who *charge* themselves only with *abstaining* from all *notorious* Vice,

Vice, and gross Immorality, but take *no Care* to *do that good* which they ought, *fall* into this deplorable *Fault*, that they have no true *Virtue*, no *Holiness* at all; and so they can have no Claim to the *Promises* made to those only who *believe*, and who *obey* the Holy Jesus.

For a *true* living *Faith* in Christ the Mediator, and a joyful *Hope* of a blessed Immortality, and a *predominant Love* of God above all things (which are the confessed *Principles*, and indispensable *Duties* of our Holy Religion) will exert and *shew* themselves in a *constant, uniform*, cheerful *Obedience* to all the *Laws* of God; and in an hearty Desire, and an earnest *Endeavour* to *resemble* the Father of our Spirits, and our great Lord and Master, who is good, and doth good, all we can: And thus to perfect that Holiness in his Fear, without which no Man shall see the Lord. [No

[No Man can so much *advance* his own Good and *Happiness* by any thing, as by *endeavouring* all that in him lies, the *greatest* Good and Welfare of *others* in all kinds: He who most carefully *performs* this *great Duty*, enjoys the truest and most *rational*, the most Divine and *God-like Pleasure* here; and will receive the *greatest Reward* hereafter.

[*Religion*, that is, an *habitual* constant *Fear* and *Love* of God in our Minds, and a due *Regard* to Him in all things, as to the great *Author* of our Being, our *last End*, and our *sovereign Good*, is certainly the nearest *Concern*, and therefore ought to be the *first Care*, and the *chief Business* of every Man's whole *Life*.

For Religion is that very *thing* which God sent us into the World about: 'Tis that which his Son came down from Heaven to instruct us, and to engage us in: 'Tis that which he sends his *Holy Spirit* to guide,

guide, *direct*, and to *assist* us in the Performance of: 'Tis *that* which is, above all other things, most *perfective* of our Nature, and most *conducive* and *necessary* to our Peace and Welfare in this World: And 'tis the *only*, and withal a *sure Way*, whereby we shall be able, through the Mercy of God in Jesus Christ, to escape everlasting *Punishment*, and to *obtain* Life Eternal in the World to come.

Thus now is Religion *the whole* of a Man, or of every Man. 'Tis the great Prerogative of his *reasonable* Nature; 'tis his *Being what* God *made him*, and *what* God *made him* for; 'tis the Sum of his *Duty*, of his *Wisdom*, of his *Happiness*, both in this Life, and in that which will never end.

[When we cannot *speak good* of the *absent*, or at least to the *bettering* of those who are *with us*, let us, by our *Silence*, if it be not *fit* to do it by open *Reproof*, put
to

to *silence* all other erring *uncharitable Discourses* of this kind.

He that *tells* me of other Men's *Virtues*, shall have both *my Ears*; he that *tells* me of their *Faults*, which appertain not to me, shall lose *my Heart*, and *my Company* too, as soon as I can get away.

Backbiting, by an instant and absolute *reversing* of *Charity* in the *Soul*, casts a *Man* headlong into the State of *Condemnation*.

[What the *Worship* of one God was to the *Jews*, that *Peace*, and *Love*, and *Unity*, is to the *Christians*, viz. the great distinguishing *Law*, and the *Character* of their *Profession*.

Were there nothing else but that *Passion* and *Peevishness*, that bitter *unchristian Zeal* and *Uncharitableness*, which the being of a *Party* doth naturally engage Men in, no Man, who consults the *Peace* of his Mind, and the *Quiet* of his Conscience, would, for any
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Consideration, *forsake* the *Communion* of that *National Church*, with which he may *without Sin* communicate; or *engage* himself with the usual *Heat* and *Violence*, and *espouse* the *Cause*, or the *separate Interest* of any *State Faction*.

[An *upright Man*, or a sincere *Christian*, hath a serious and *heartly Sense* of *God*, and of *Religion*, at all *Times* upon his *Spirit*; and is *careful* above all *Things*, to *preserve* and *increase* that *Sense*. He takes *Care* to *live* as he *believes*; to *practise* suitably to his *Profession*. He doth not *place* his *Religion* chiefly in outward *Forms* and *Services*, but in *Faith*, and in *Meekness*, and *Humility*, and in *Mercy*, and in the *Love of God*, and of his *Brother*. He calls no *Sin* little, because his *Temper inclines* him to it; or his *Course of Life* *leads him* more frequently into the *Temptation*. He is as *careful* of his *Thoughts*, and of his *Words*, as of his *Actions*.

[He who hath a *Zeal* of, or for God, according to *Knowledge*, *Rom. x. 2.* never pretends a *Religious Zeal* for that which is no *Part* of his *Religion*. He takes Care to have such *rational Grounds* for it, as will *satisfy* other unbiassed Persons.

His *Zeal* must never lay a greater *Weight* upon little things, than they can well bear.

It must be always carefully *joined* with a hearty *Love* and *Charity* to the *Persons* of Men, and only weigh the just *Merits* of the *Cause*. It must pursue *Lawful Ends* only by *Lawful Means*.

[We then begin to enjoy *true Pleasure*, when our *divineſt Faculties*, which were laid *asleep* while we lived in the *Life* of *Sense*, *awaken*, and *exercise* themselves upon their proper *Objects*; when *acquainting* our selves with *God*, that infinite *Abyss* of *Good*, and being made *sensible* of that great *Love*

Love and *good Will* he bears us; our *Hearts* are powerfully *carried out* in Joy and *Love*, and in Desire after him; and when we feel the *Divine Nature* more and more *displayed* in our Souls, *shewing* forth it self in *Charity*, Peaceableness, *Purity*, and all other *Graces* of the Holy Spirit.

[He *serves* God best who is most *serviceable* to God's Children in his Generation.

Since every Man is obliged to do what *Good* he can in his *Lifetime*, they are greatly *mistaken*, and much to *blame*, who *do none* till their *Death*, tho' it be by an *extraordinary Bounty* then: Such a Man's *Reward* will be much *less* in Heaven, tho' his *so late* good Deeds should be *accepted*; which is infinitely *uncertain* whether they will or no. It must be a very *great Act* of Generosity and *Charity*, which can obtain *Pardon* for a *whole Life* of Uncharitableness.

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As a *Death Bed* Repentance is a giving over *sinning*, when a Man *can sin now no longer*; so such a *Death Bed* Charity is only the Man's giving from his Heir, what he himself can now no longer either *use* or *keep*.

[The Duty of *rejoicing in the Lord always*, Phil. iv. 4. is a constant *Habit of Joy*, founded first in the *Testimony* of our Conscience, that we *make it* our first and our *chief Care*, to obey and please God; next, in a firm *Belief* that *nothing* doth, or can *happen* to us, if we fear, serve, and trust in him, but what is *best* for us: And lastly, in a frequent *Consideration* of, and Attention to those great *Rewards* of the other World, which God hath *promised* to all them who *truly love* Him, and heartily and constantly *endeavour* to please Him.

[Rich Men should often *consider*, that they will be *undone* to all *Eternity*, unless they *do Good*, in
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some good *Proportion* to that Wealth God hath given them for that very *End*: That all *Want* of Charity and *Beneficence* to Christ's Brethren; is a Piece of *Dishonesty*, a *falsifying* their Trust, an *embezzelling* their Master's Goods, and putting them to *quite other Uses*, than those for which He gave them: And that no *one Sin* more certainly *excludes* Men from *Salvation* than this.

[The *Glory* of God, and the *publick Good*, are the great *Ends* which a wise and good Man *propounds* to himself in taking any *Office* or *publick Employment*; his *Counsels* and *Actions* are all steered by the Sense of his *Duty*.

[The *too free use* of our *Liberty* in Things *Lawful*, is one of the great *Sources* from whence most of our *Irregularities* do proceed. Indeed *nothing* but this could betray well-meaning Persons, and such as are *virtuously disposed*, into *Sin*.]

When a Man *heartily loves* his God, and his Neighbour, and hath such a lively *Sense* of the *Truth* and the Excellency of *Christ's Religion*, that he is resolved, that it shall influence and govern the whole *Course of his Life*, there can hardly occur *any Case*, in which he will not have *Rules* ready to *direct* him in his Proceedings.

It is in most *Cases* very easy to determine, at least, concerning the *Expediency* of Actions; that is, whether it *be best*, or fittest for a Man to do them, or not.

[It is *acknowledged* by those who *use it most*, that *deep Play*, or Gaming for great Sums, *exposes a Man* to great and dangerous *Temptations*; that it is the *Occasion* of Abundance of *Sin*, and Abundance of *Mischief*, and seldom fails to *produce* intolerable Consequences, both as to *Mens Souls*, and *Estates*, and *Families*. And this is enough in all Conscience

science to *deter* any Man, who loves his God, and his own *Soul*, and who hath a tender *Sense* of his *Duty*, from the Practice of *Gaming*, tho' it be not made *appear* to him, that it is expressely *forbid* by the Law of Christ.

[Tis evident, that to forbear *painting* and *patching* the Face, and all such *suspicious*, because at first *meretricious* Ornaments, is most *agreeable* to that *Modesty*, and Chastity, and *Humility*, and to that needful *Caution*, not to give the least *Occasion* of *Sin*, or of *Scandal* to others, which are the proper *Ornaments* of a true Disciple of the Holy Jesus. And this certainly is *Reason* enough to make every *prudent* and serious Christian *despise* those ensnaring *Dresses* which were first introduced by *lewd Women*, to very bad *Purposes*; and by which no *good End* can be served, but Abundance of *Evil* often arises from them.

The more *pious* and discreet Persons therefore should have the *Courage* to shew themselves to be *wiser* and *better* than the silliest and the *worst Part* of their Sex, who are ever *foremost* in these, at first *ridiculous Modes*, and always shameful *Triumphs*, of loose, scandalous *Vanity*, *Pride*, and *Folly*, over *primitive severe Chastity*, and truly *Christian Humility*, *Wisdom*, and *Sobriety*.

Wherever we have a *just Ground* of *Suspicion* or *Doubt*, in Things of this Nature (*viz.*) *Gaming*, *Dressing*, &c. whether they are *lawful* or no, this *Doubt* or *Suspicion* is of it self *Reason enough* to make us *forbear* them.

[There is *no Evil* in not *gratifying* our *Desires* and *Appetites* in all *things* which are *allowable*; but there is an *infinite Evil* in *gratifying* them in unlawful *forbidden Instances*. And therefore every *wise* and *good Man* will be sure to
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keep on the *safe Side*; and to *prevent* the Danger of doing *more* than he *should* do, he will not do *always all* which he *may* do.

It is a *good Rule* to propose to ourselves, that in *Matters of Duty*, we should rather do *too much*, than *too little*; but in *Matters of Indifference*, we should rather take *too little* of our Liberty, than *too much*.

Let us not stand upon *Points* with Almighty God; but let us so entirely *devote* our selves to his Service, as to do not only all those *Things* which we are strictly bound to do, or else we are *Transgressors*; but all those *Things* likewise which are *acceptable* to Him, and which tend to the *Perfection* of our Nature, and to the *Reputation* of Christ's Religion.

[Those who *ridicule* Religion, and the Professors of it, as *weak Men*, if we are to measure the *Greatness* of their *Crime* by the *Mischief* they do, ought not to ex-

expect so much Favour from Mankind, as some other *Malefactors*, who *pay* for their Offences with their *Lives*.

It may justly be computed, that a great deal more *Christian Blood* hath been shed for the *establishing Popery*, as it now stands, than ever was shed during all the *Times* of the Heathen *Persecution*, for the supporting of *Paganism*.

[In the Nature of the Thing, none can be *truly happy*, but those who are *truly pious*. And in the same *Degree* and Proportion that any Man is *wicked*, or is under the Power of his Lust, in the same Degree he must needs be *miserable*.

[*To keep our Hearts with all Diligence*, Prov. iv. 23. imports, That we ought to *attend to*, and narrowly *watch* the very *first Thoughts*, *Motions*, and *Affections* of our Minds, lest we at any time *consent* to something we ought not; because *out of the Heart are the*

the Issues of Life, i. e. the Fruits and *Effects* which are shewn in our Lives, *proceed* from the *Heart*: And as our Caution and *Watchfulness* in this Point is greater, or less, so will our *Course of Life* be better or worse.

Sudden Thoughts, Passions, or *Desires* (tho' irregular) are *very little*, if at all in *our Power*; being so quick, that there is *no Time* given for *Reason* to interpose: A Mind also *vigorously affected* either with outward *Objects* of Sense, or any inward *Passion*, hath *little* or no *Command* of its Thoughts: And a Man's *Thoughts* may be *forced* upon him, and so *out of his Power*, by or from the present *Temper* and Indisposition of his *Body*, as in deep *Melancholy*: Out of these *three Cases*, we may *choose* our Thoughts, or we can *apply* our Mind more *vigorously* to one sort of *things* than to another.

But 'tis always in *our Power* to

give, or to *deny* our *Consent* to our Thoughts. And if we *endeavour* to *stifle*, and do *resist* them, as soon as we are *aware* of them, however undecent or *irregular* they may be, they are rather to be accounted the *Infirmities* of our corrupt *Nature*, than our *Sins* properly so called. But if we *consent* to any evil Thought, *delight* in it, and think of *pursuing* it, till it be brought into *Action*, then are we *actual Transgressors* of the *Law* of God, the *Obligation* of which reaches to our very *Hearts* and *Thoughts*, as well as to our *Actions*.

[In order to our *well-governing* our Thoughts, we must first of all *take* great *Care* that we rightly *pitch* our *main Design*; and that we *choose* that for the great *Business* of our *Lives*, which really *is*, and therefore *ought* to be so, and to be pursued as such by us.

If we make the *Service* of our God, and the *Salvation* of our
own

own Souls, (which are most certainly our *nearest* and biggest *Concern*) our main *Design* and *Affair*, our *Thoughts* will as naturally, *easily* and frequently *run* upon those *Objects*, as the *Worldling's* doth upon his poor *Idols* of Money, Honour, or sensual Pleasure.

[There are doubtless much greater *Charms* in *Virtue* and *Goodness*; in the *Love* and the *Favour* of God; in a *pure Conscience* here, and *Eternal Glory* hereafter, than there can be in any mean, *worldly*, sensual, perishing *Things*, to attract the Mind of a *wise Man*, and wholly or chiefly *take up* his *Thoughts*.

[He who would be able to give a good Account of his *Thoughts* to God, must carefully avoid two Things, *Idleness*, and *idle*, or *loose Company*. Both these *unhinge* a Man's Mind, and *disarm* it of that *Sobriety*, or prudent *Severity* which is its best *Guard* and *De-*

fence against evil *Thoughts*, and make it an easy *Prey* to every *Temptation*.

'Tis also of great *Moment* for keeping our Hearts, to be as *attentive* as we possibly can, to every *first Motion* of our Minds; and as soon as ever we can, to *stop* whatever *tends* to any Thing that is forbidden. We ought immediately to *withdraw* from any tempting *Object*, and to direct our Thoughts some other ways; at least, *never* to make *any one Step* towards the *accomplishing* any unlawful *Desire*.

By giving such timely *Check* to every *first Motion* to any Sin, we shall both *preserve* our Innocency, and also *increase* our Power over our *Thoughts*, if ever that *Temptation*, or any other such like, *return* again.

Frequent *Converse* with discreet and *pious* Persons; *reading* good Books, especially the *Holy Scriptures*; *taking set Times* for Meditation

tation and Recollection; and above all, *fervent* and frequent *Prayer* to God, are the proper *Means* , not only to keep *bad* Thoughts out of our Minds, but to *have* a constant Spring of good ones.

[I would not call every *Thought* a vain, or idle, or a *sinful* Thought, which hath not *God* or our *spiritual* Concernments for its *Object* . Those *Thoughts* about other Things may be *innocent* , which do not intrench upon the *Laws* of *Piety* , or *Purity* , or *Charity* .

Our *wandering* Thoughts in Prayer, if we *strive* against them all we can, and endeavour to *keep* our Minds in a *devout* , composed *Temper* , and *attend* as well as we can to the *Duty* we are about, I hope, will never rise up in *Judgment* against us.

Those frightful *blasphemous* *Fancies* , which some even *pious* Persons are *tormented* with, of all other

other irregular Thoughts, have the *least Danger of Sin* in them, tho' they be not solemnly and formally *disputed* with; and contested. They are indeed great *Infelicities*, but by no means any *Sin*, any farther than they are approv'd of; which 'tis *impossible* any tolerably good Man *can do*.

[No Man ever found *true Pleasure* and *solid rational Peace* and Enjoyment, till he became *acquainted* with God, and was *made sensible* of his Love and Goodness, and a *Partaker* of his spiritual *Favours*; and *lived* in an entire *Friendship* and *Communion* with Him; which *Friendship* and *Communion* is *chiefly*, if not only, both express'd and *maintained* by *Prayer Praises*, and *Thanksgivings*, *Holy Meditation*, and other *spiritual Exercises*.

[How can any Man answer it to his God, and to his own *Conscience*, to be heartily *angry*, when he

he himself is *affronted*; and yet to be altogether *insensible*, or less *concerned*, when his *Father*, and his best *Friend*, that God who *made* him, and on whom he wholly *depends* for his being, and for his well-being, is boldly *affronted* in his Presence, by horrid, blasphemous *Oaths* and *Imprecations*, or by *impious* atheistical *Discourses*.

[Whosoever makes Conscience of praying frequently and *heartily*, and *continues* so to do, tho' he cannot at present be said to be a *good Man*, yet it is impossible for him long to *continue bad*. He will certainly at last *get the Victory* over his *Lusts* and evil Habits; so that *Prayer* is both the *Means*, without which *Virtue* cannot be attained; and the *Means* that never fails of attaining it; and the *Security* of it when it is attained.

To have the Liberty and Opportunity

portunity of *worshipping God in publick every Day*, is one of the greatest *Blessings and Privileges* that we can have in this *World*; and hath by *good Men* always been so *accounted*.

[If a Man do not so *lead his Life*, that he may *approach* to the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper* every *Month*, nay, every *Week*, nay, every *Day*, if there be Occasion; I am afraid that he doth not *live* so, as to be *fit for it*, though he comes but *once* in a *Year*, or but *once* in *seven Year*.

[Prayer, or *Devotion*, is as necessary a Means to preserve the *Union* between the Soul and God, in which our *spiritual Life* consists; as *Meat and Drink* is to preserve the *Union* between our Souls and Bodies, in which our *natural Life* consists.

[Surely it cannot but be Matter of very *dreadful* Consideration to any one in his Wits to think seriously,

seriously, what *Horror* and *Confusion* must needs *surprize* that Man at the *last Day*, who hath *led his whole Life*, and governed all his *Actions*, by *one Rule*, when God intends to *judge* him by *another*.

Now the *Rule* or *Law*, by which we Christians shall be *judged*, our Lord hath declared to be such an *unfeigned Faith*, or such an hearty *Belief* of his *Gospel*, as engages us so to *love* God, as that we make it our chief *Care*, and our constant *Endeavour*, to keep his *Commandments*.

Nothing under an *universal* sincere *Obedience* to all the *Precepts* of the *Gospel*; or such a *Repentance* as engages him in an *Holy Life* for the *Time* to come, can entitle any Man to the *Benefits* of the *Gospel*: And thus *deep* and *far* he must go if he will lay his *Foundation* sure.

[In every *Sin* *deliberately* *committed*,

mitted, there are, generally speaking, many *more Degrees of Probability*, that that Sin will never come to be *pardon'd*, than that it will: 1. Because every *such Commission of Sin imprints* upon the Soul, a certain *Hardness* and Aptness to *continue* in that Sin; together with a further *Disposition* and Proneness to other Sins. 2. Because *Repentance*, which alone can entitle the Sinner to *Pardon*, is not in his *Power*: It is the Gift of God. And general *Experience* shows, that where *one* such Sinner ever comes to *repent*, an Hundred, I might say a *Thousand*, at least, *die* in final *Impenitence*; or with such a *false*, constrained, ineffectual *Shew of Repentance*, as can *avail* them nothing, when Christ shall *judge* every Man according to what he hath *done* in the *Body*.

[Every *deliberate* chosen Sin, is in Effect *renouncing* our Allegiance to

to our *Creator*, and to our *Lord*, who hath bought us ; and *preserving* the *Tyranny* of the Devil, and the *Slavery* of some vile *Lust*, and sinful *Passion*, which he tempts to, before the *Service* of God : 'Tis not only *defying* his Authority, and *Power*, and *Justice* ; but 'tis also *affronting* the *Wisdom* and the *Goodness* of God ; all whose *Laws* are *perfective* of our Nature, and *conducive* to our Happiness, as well in this Life, as in that which will never end.

Nothing in Nature is more *irrational*, and consequently more *immoral*, than for an *intelligent Being* to oppose or disobey that *Sovereign Will*, which gave him that *Being* ; and hath withal the absolute *Disposal* of him, in all his *Concerns* in both Worlds.

[Shall he pretend to *religious Attainments*, who is *defective* and short in the *moral*, which yet are but the *Rudiments*, the *Beginnings* and

and first Draught of *Religion*? As *Religion* is the *Perfection* and the *Refinement of Morality*, so it still *presupposes* it: It builds upon it, and *Grace* never *adds* the Superstructure, when *Virtue* hath not *laid* the *Foundation*: *Grace* is never without *Virtue*; and no Man's *Religion* ever *survives* his *Morals*.

[The very *Life* and *Soul* of all *Religion* is *Sincerity*; for the more *spiritual* and refined any *Sin* is, the more hardly is the *Soul* cured of it; because the more difficultly *convinced*: And in all our *spiritual* *Maladies*, *Conviction* must still begin the *Cure*.

Tho' some may be apt to account none *sinful*, but such as *wallow* in the *Mire* and *Filth* of gross *Sensuality*; yet no doubt, *Deceit*, *Falseness* and *Hypocrisy*; *Pride* and *Envy*, *Ill-Will*, *Malice*, *Revenge*, and *Avarice*, are more directly *contrary* to the very *Essence* and *Design*

Design of the *Christian Religion*, and carry in them more of the express *Image* and *Superscription* of the *Devil*, than any *bodily Sin* whatever.

[He who, upon a *firm Persuasion* of the *Truth* of the *Christian Religion*, keeps ever in his *View* an *eternal Happiness*, or *Misery*, suspended upon a *few Days Behaviour*, cannot but live every *Hour* as for *Eternity*. To act otherwise under such a powerful *Influence*, is really to *defy* the *Justice* of *Heaven*, and to bid *Omnipotence* do its worst. Thus *Sin* insatuates before it *destroys*: And the *Devil* reigns over none but those whom he first deceives and befools.

[He who *sins*, either upon *Presumption* of God's *Mercy*, reversing the *Decree* of his *Justice* in his *Behalf*; or upon *Presumption* of his own *Purpose* of a future *Repentance*, acts as directly in *Contradiction* to *Nature* as he doth
in

in *Defiance of Grace* : He hath lost his *Reason*, and what then can there be for *Religion* to take hold of him by !

The *Spirit* of God never stays with a Man when *Conscience* hath once left him.

[We are so far from being warranted to beg of God Wealth, Greatness, and Honour, that we are to beg his *Grace*, to despise and to undervalue them. Nothing can be fit for us to pray for, but what is fit and honourable for our great Mediator *Jesus Christ* himself to intercede for. This is to be the unchangeable *Rule* and Measure of all our *Petitions*.

[The *Incentives* of the Stage, equal and exceed all filthy *Discourses*, wanton *Books* and *Pictures*, in provoking incontinent Persons, and in making new *Proselytes* to *Impurity*, as well as to *Intemperance* and *Profaneness*.

These *Heathenish Shows*, the
Pomps

Pomps and Vanities of this wicked *World* (however encouraged by the *Quality* and *Numbers* of those who should give better *Example*) insensibly *steal away* that natural *Modesty*, from the weaker *Sex*, and the weaker *Age*, which, next to the *Grace* of God, is the best *Security* of their *Innocency* against the *Strength* of their *Inclination* to sensual *Pleasures*, in that *Nonage* of their Reason. The modish *Assurance* they there get, to bear, and to see indecent Things; *Vice* set off with Art, Wit, and Applause; and *strict Piety* and *Virtue* ridiculed and discountenanced, naturally proceeds to *Boldness* in Sin, and their being ashamed of nothing, but of *Christian Sobriety*, *Wisdom*, and *Religion*.

These *Traders for Hell* then, who write leud *profane Plays*, and who act them on the Stage, the *Devil's Setters*, the common *Poisoners of Youth*, with which our Nation

Nation hath of late Years abound-
ed, *live* upon the Shark, and upon
other Mens *Sins* ; and *get* their
very *Bread* by the *Damnation* of
Souls.

[In order both to the *getting*
and *keeping* of the *Conscience* so
well *informed*, that it may be able
to give us a rational *Confidence* to-
wards God, the Voice of *Reason*,
in all the *Dictates* of natural *Mo-*
rality, ought to be carefully *at-*
tended to ; by a strict Observance
of what it *commands*, but especi-
ally of what it *forbids*.

Every pious *Motion* from the
Spirit of God, ought tenderly to
be cherished, and by no means
checked or quenched, either by
Resistance or *Neglect*.

Conscience is to be kept close to
the *Rule* of the written Word ;
and is frequently to be *examined*,
and severely *accounted with*.

[Without such frequent *Exa-*
mination of his *Conscience*, a Man
is

is wholly *in the dark*, as to the greatest *Concern* he hath in both *Worlds*: He hath shrewd Cause to *believe* God to be his *Enemy*, and cannot possibly know him to be his *Friend*. And this being his Case, he must live in *Ignorance*, and die in *Ignorance*; and it will be *hard* for a Man to die *in it*, without dying *by it* too.

Possibly some never so much as *doubted* of the *Safety* of their spiritual Estate in all their *Lives*; and if so, let them not flatter themselves, but rest *assured*, that they have so much the more *Reason* a great deal to *doubt* of it now.

[Every *particular* Commission of any great *Sin*, such as *Murder*, *Uncleanness*, *Drunkenness*, &c. every *repeated* Practice of any *known Sin* whatever; every *corrupt Passion*, or evil *Affection* of the Mind, hath a mighty *Power* in it to *darken* the natural *Light*, and to *pervert* the discerning and
judging

judging Power of Conscience. When the *Affections* are any of these Ways once engaged, the *Judgment* is always *partial* on their Side.

Sensuality, Covetousness, and Pride or *Ambition*, are the three principal vicious *Affections*, which *darken*, and then *debauch* the *Conscience*. Those false and fallacious *Pleasures of Sense*, which *bewitch* the *Body*, thereby become the very *Poison* of the nobler and *intellectual Part* of Man. *Whoredom and Wine*, Hosea iv. 11. *take away the Heart*, that is (according to the Language of Holy Writ) a Man's *true Sense*, or Preception of Things, his right *Judgment*, or discerning *Abilities*.

[*Covetousness*, or a great Desire and Love of *Riches*, above all other Vices, most powerfully carries the *Soul downward*, makes it all *Earth*; and makes the Man a poor stupid Brute.

This Sin hath such a peculiar *blinding Power*, and so *befools* the Mind,

Mind, and confounds the Reason; even in the *ablest, wisest, and most sagacious Men*; that the most *covetous Wretch* breathing doth not perceive, nor can he be persuaded; by all the *Reason, Religion, Evidence, and Demonstration*, any Man can use to convince him, that he is *covetous*; or in any Degree *guilty* of that most dangerous, most *damnable, and shameful Sin*.

[*Pride* was the Devil's *Sin*, and the Devil's *Ruin*; and it hath been ever since the Devil's *Master-Stragem*. Ambition first *blinds* the Conscience, and then *leads* the Man whither it *will*, that is, in the direct *Course* of it, to the *Devil*,

[Nothing can make one Man so much an *Enemy* to another, as *Sin* makes every Sinner an *Enemy* to God.

Pride is a Quality so peculiarly *odious* to God, that it may be said not so much to *imprint* upon Men the *Image*, as to *communicate* to

them the very Nature and *Es-*
sence of Lucifer.

[This is most certain, and wor-
thy our best Observation, that
whatsoever carries a Man off from
God, (tho' at first never so little)
will, in the natural *Course* and
Tendency of it, carry him still
farther and farther, till at length
it leave him neither *Will* nor *Power*
to return.

[The *End* and *Design* of the
Kingdom of the Messiah is, to
take Men off from all carnal, earth-
ly, *sensual Enjoyments*, as the cer-
tain *Hinderers* of Piety, and *Un-*
derminers of the Spirit; and to
plant his Kingdom in their *Hearts*;
and by infusing into them the
Graces of *Humility*, *Temperance*,
Heavenly-mindedness, and *Charity*,
to conquer their *Corruptions*, and
to reign over all their carnal irre-
gular *Affections* and *Passions*.

[The *Jews*, who rejected Christ,
are much more excusable than those
Chris-

Christians, who acknowledging the Divine Authority both of his Person, and of his Gospel, contradict that in their Lives, which they avow in their Creeds.

He who prefers a base, shameful Lust, false Honour, sinful Pleasure or Profit, before Christ, spits in his Face, as much as the Jews did: And as little Allowance of Mercy will be made to such Christians, who reject Christ in his Laws, as to those very Men who nailed Him to his Cross.

[No Man holds the Abundance of Wealth, and Power, and Honour, or of great Parts, Wisdom, or Abilities of any kind, as a Proprietor, but as a Steward. He is a Trustee of Providence, to use and dispense what God deposits (and doth but deposit in his Hand) for the Good of those he converses with. He ought to act as God's Deputy, and to use all his Powers, as God himself would do, should

he be pleased to *act* immediately in Affairs here below.

[Prosperity (as the *Nature* of Man now stands) hath a peculiar *Force* and *Fitness* to *abate* Mens Virtues, and to *heighten* their Corruptions.

Nothing more effectually betrays the Heart into a *Love* of Sin, and a *Loathing* of Holiness, than an ill managed *Prosperity*.

[The *unclean Devil* haunts the *Families* of the *Rich*, the *Gallant*, the *High-livers*, and *High-seeders*: and there is nothing but the *Wisdom* from above, which descends only upon *strict*, *humble*, and *praying Persons*, that can preserve the Soul pure and sound in the *killing* Neighbourhood of such a *Contagion*.

God even looks upon his own *Supremacy* as concern'd to *abase* a proud Man.

Every Man hath so much of *Folly* in him, as he hath of *Sin*; and so much of *Sin*; as he hath of *Pride*. [Every

[Every *sinful* Action a Man doth, naturally disposes him to *another*, and prepares him for a worse.

Till we have made Religion our fixed *Choice*, 'tis but *Talk* and *Fancy*: The *Heart* must appropriate and *take hold* of the great *Truths* of Christianity for its *Portion* and *Happiness*, and its *chief Good*, before we are, or can be Christians in good earnest.

The surest Way to *confirm* our Faith about the sacred and important *Truths* of Religion, is to *love* them for their transcendent *Worth* and *Purity*; to fix our *Inclinations* and *Affections* upon them, and to *rejoice* that there should be such Things prepared for us as the Holy Scripture tells there are.

[Men are *Atheists*, not because they have *better Wits* than other Men, but because they have *corrupter Wills*; not because they *reason better*, but because they *live worse*.

Prodigality is the Devil's Steward, ministering to all Sorts of Vice whatever, even to Covetousness it self at the long Run.

There are more Instances of such as *Riches* have made *covetous*, than of such as *Covetousness* has made *rich*.

[What *Happiness* can there be in that *Condition*, (*viz.* of being Rich, &c.) which renders *Virtue* a Thing of it self so *difficult*, infinitely *more difficult*; which turns the *strait Gate* into a *Needle's Eye*; and makes the *Way* to Hell, which is so *broad* already, ten Times *broader* than it was before?

[True *Happiness* and *Comfort* stream immediately from God Himself, as Light issues from the Sun.

Every Man is *happy* or *miserable*, as the *Temper* of his Mind places him, either directly *under*, or *beside*, and farther from the *Influences* of the *Divine Nature*; which *enlighten* and enliven the
well

well disposed *Mind* with secret ineffable Joys; and such as the vicious, or unprepared *Mind*, is wholly unacquainted with.

[That innate *Restlessness of Desire*, implanted in the *Soul of Man*, is the great *Engine* by which God would draw it to Himself; since it can never fix upon any Thing which can fully satisfy it, till in the last Issue it terminates in God.

God made the *Heart of Man* for no other Purpose, but that He might dwell in it: and He sent *Man* into the World with such mighty *Endowments*, not so much to enjoy it, as to have the Honour of despising it; and upon Experience of its woful Vanity, to find Cause, in all his Thoughts and Desires, to return and fly back to his Maker, like the Dove to the Ark, when it could rest no where else.

[Men now and then bestow some short scattering Thoughts upon
C 4 their

their *Souls*, and their *future Estate*, provided they are at *full Leisure* from their *Business* and their *Sports*. But this amounts to *no more* than their being *religious* on *Sundays* only, or when they *have nothing* else to do. All which, and a great deal *more*, is far short of *making Religion* a Man's *chief Business*; tho' if it be *not so*, it is in Effect just *nothing* at all.

If Men would be at *half the pains* to provide themselves *Treasure* in Heaven, which they are at generally to get *Estates* here on Earth, it were *impossible* for any Man to be *damned*.

[A strictly virtuous Education of *Youth*, or being *early instructed* in the great and important *Truths* of our holy *Religion*, and by all prudent Ways and Means *early engaged* in a conscientious Discharge of the *Duties* it enjoins, is absolutely *necessary* to a Man's attainment of that *inestimable Blessing*,

sing, that unspeakable Felicity of being *serviceable* to his God, *easy* to himself, and *useful* to others, in the whole Course of his following Life.

Now that Piety or *Godliness* which our Religion obliges us to, and in the *Grounds* and *Necessity* of which all young Persons are to be carefully *instructed*, and *inured* to the *Practice* of it, as soon as they come to the Use of their *Reason*, is a *Perfection* comprehending in it all the *Graces* of a *Christian*; and no less than the *Image* of God himself *new stamp'd* upon the *Soul*.

He only therefore, young Persons are to be taught, is a pious or a *godly Man*, according to the stated, unalterable *Rules* and *Measures* of *Christianity*, who is actually *in Covenant* with God, and that not only by external *Profession*, but by real *Relation*; a *Relation* entitling him to all the

Benefits

Benefits of a *federal Estate*, by his coming up to the *Conditions* of it: Or, to be yet more particular, he only is a *true sincere Christian*, who with a full and fixed *Resolution* of Heart, has taken the *whole Law* of Christ, in the several *Precepts* of it, with the utmost *Hardships* attending them, for his *Portion* in this World, and the *Promises* of it for his *Inheritance* in the next.

For he, and he only, as the *Gospel* teaches us, is the *Christian* indeed, who rules his *Appetites* by his *Reason*, and both by his *Religion*: He who makes his *Duty* his *Business*, till at length he comes to make it his *Delight* too: He whose sole Design is to be *pious*, without affecting to be *thought* so: He who *lives* and *acts* by a mighty *Principle* within, which the *World* about him neither sees nor *understands*; a Principle respecting all *God's Commands* without *Reserve*:
 Lastly,

Lastly; in a Word, he who allows not himself in the *Omission* of any known *Duty*; or in the *Commission* of the *least* known *Sin*.

[He who is *wise* enough to take the *Service* of his God, and the *Salvation* of his own Soul, for his chief *Business*, and truest *Interest*, and will *look upon* those *Things*, *Persons*, *Companies*, and *Actions*, which perhaps he never *ventured* upon in all his *Life*; but he brought away *matter of Repentance* from them, as so many *Engines* planted against him by the *Devil*; and accordingly he would fly from them, as he would from the Mouth of a *Cannon*; or the infectious *Air* or *Breath* of a *Pest house*; assuring himself, that the same *Poison* will still have the same pernicious and deadly *Operation*. He will make no *Acquaintance* with those whom nothing will satisfy but to go to *Hell* with them for *Company*; nor will he have any thing to do with
any

any *House* or *Family*, tho' never so great, and never so much in Power, where the *Devil* is *Major Domo*, and governs all.

He who will be *safe*, where he is infinitely *concern'd* to be so, will never follow any *Employment*, or *Course of Life*, which may immoderately and dangerously *work upon* any of his *Passions*; which may swell his carnal *Hopes*, increase his *Love* of the *World*, or his *Love* of *Money*; which may *provoke* and feed his *sensual Appetites*, or heighten his *Pride* and *Ambition*. He who *uses* not all wise *Precautions*, in a Matter of such vast *Moment*, as it is whether he shall be *happy* or *miserable* for ever, most foolishly *enters* into that *Temptation* which our Lord commands his Disciples, *Matth. xxvi. 41.* to *watch* against, and to *pray* against.

[*Idleness* is that Vice or Sin which sets all the Capacities of the

the Soul *wide open*, to let in the evil Spirit, and to give both him, and all the Villanies he can bring along with him, a free *Reception*, and a full *Possession*: Whereas being always *employed* in any just and lawful *Course of Life*, shuts the *Doors*, and stops all the *Avenues* of the Mind, whereby a *Temptation* would enter; or if it should chance to creep in, leaves no *void room* for it to dwell there; so that the more *active* such a good Man is, he is still the more *innocent*; and every such good Action both perfects *Nature*, and ministers to *Grace*.

[Intemperance, or *Sensuality* is a kind of *Mother Vice*, and the producing *Cause* of infinitely more; it renders a Man equally *useless* to others, and *mischievous* to himself; and is that *broad Way* by which three Parts of the World, at least, go to the Devil; whereas *Temperance* has the *most general*

Influence upon all other particular *Virtues*, of any that the Soul of Man is capable of: It is the greatest Strengthner and Clearer of *Reason*, and the best Preparer of it for *Religion*, the Sister of *Prudence*, and the Handmaid to *Devotion*: It makes the temperate Man always *himself*, gives him the constant *Command* of his Reason, and keeps him under the *Command* of his Religion: It makes him always fit to *converse* with his God, and always fit and ready to *answer* the Devil, by taking away the very *Matter* of the Temptation, and so eluding the Tempter's *Design*, for want of Materials to work upon.

For, it is seldom that a *Temptation* fastens upon a Man to any purpose, but in the Strength of some one or other of his *Passions*; and this is a sure Observation, that where *Temperance* over-rules the *Appetites*, there *Reason* is ablest to

to command the *Passions*; and that till the former be done, the latter will be impracticable.

[It is incredible what *ground Sin*, tho' in the very least, and most inconsiderable Instance, gets of the *Soul* of that Man, who so far extenuates and undervalues it, as that he will not think his *eternal Happiness* concern'd in his *watching* against it. For by this Means it is easily *let into* the Soul, and seldom *thrown out*. No *Caution* is applied beforehand, nor *Repentance* after. And surely it cannot but be *dangerous* to leave the World with any one Sin *unrepented of*.

[The transcendent Greatness of *God's Love* to the Saints appears in those excellent *Privileges* that accrue to them from it. The first of which the Saints enjoy even in *this Life*, namely, to be the *Sons of God*, the adopted Children, and so the more particular *Care* too of
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the Almighty; to be admitted into the nearest and dearest *Relation* to the great *Creator* and *Lord* of Heaven and Earth. 1 *John* iii. *ver.* 1. The second great Privilege is to be enjoyed by the Saints in the *Life to come*, and that is no less than a *Likeness* to Christ himself in *Glory*, a *Participation* of those grand, sublime *Prerogatives* that Christ is endowed withal.

Now the very *Expectation* of that unconceivable Happiness *we hope for* in Heaven, if it be rational and *well-grounded*, affords every *Son of God*, every sincere Christian, more *true Comfort*, than the Possession and *Enjoyment* of the greatest earthly *Contentment*, or good things whatsoever, can do to a *wise* and thinking Man.

[Every one who hopes to be *like* Christ hereafter in the Brightness of his *Glory*, must exert his utmost *Diligence* to resemble Him now in the *Purity* of his Life too.

He

He must *purify* himself from the *Power of Sin*, heartily *bewailing* all those Sins he hath at any time committed, by a continually renewed *Repentance*; watchfully *preventing* all Acts of Sin for the future; carefully heeding and *avoiding* all those Objects and *Occasions* which are apt to *betray* him into the Commission of any Sin whatsoever; *weakening* the Root of inherent, original *Corruption*, by all the *Means* and *Motives* proposed in the Holy Scriptures; and *striving*, as for his Life, and for Eternity, to introduce the *Power of Godliness* into his Heart and Life, in the room of the *Power of Sin*.

In order to which great and worthy End, he who in earnest designs to *purify* himself from the *Power of Sin*, must with all his Might, and utmost Speed, *oppose* the very first *Risings* and *Movings* of his *Heart* towards any, even
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the least *Transgression* of any *Law* of God: He must *accustom* himself to those Duties of a prudent *Mortification*, which tend to the destroying the *Dominion of Sin*, by keeping under the *Body*, and making it tame, and obedient to the Reason of the *Mind*: He must never use his *Liberty* in things most lawful or indifferent, so far as to be, at any time, *indisposed* thereby to a more near and spiritual *Converse* with his God: He must above all things, be sure to be very frequent and very earnest in secret *Prayer* to Almighty God, for *daily* fresh *Supplies* of his preventing and sanctifying *Grace*.

And that he may be *purify'd* also from the *Guilt of Sin*, he must *apply the Blood of Christ* to his own *Soul*, by *renewed Acts of Faith*. And that not only in *general*, but after every *particular Commission* of any known *Sin*; if he hopes to be forgiven, he must repair to the
Death

Death of our blessed Lord, by particular *Actings* of his *Faith* upon *Christ's Blood* shed for the *Remission of his Sin*: Which *Actings* also of themselves cleanse not away the *Guilt* of Sin, but the *Virtue* of *Christ's Blood* only, convey'd by them to the *Soul*. For nothing can *cleanse* the *Soul*, but that *Blood* which *redeemed* the *Soul* both from the *Guilt* of Sin, and from that *eternal Death* which is the *Wages* of Sin.

[Since no Man is, or can be a *Son of God*, but he only who is led and govern'd by the *Spirit of God*; nor can any Man reasonably *hope* to see, and to be *like* to our Blessed Lord, in all his *Glory* hereafter, but he only who makes it his *Business* in this Life to *purify* himself even as he is *pure*; it is evident, that the very *Hopes* and Religion of every *profane* and vicious *Liver* is but *Mockery* and *Pretence*. For can
any

any one of *common Sense* really expect to be *saved* in the constant *Practice* of those *Enormities*, for which the God of *Truth* himself assures him he shall be *damned*? Can any Man *hope* for that, of which he hath scarce a *Thought*? Or expect to enjoy God *hereafter*, tho' he lives wholly without him *here*? Can any Man hope to be *saved* by him whom he *desys* and denies in his Works? Or can he *expect* that Christ should *own* him in another World, when he rejects, *despises*, and tramples upon his *Commands* in this? Is it possible that any but stark *Fools*, Brutes, or *Mad Men*, be they never so great or wise in their own vain Imagination, can *trifle* so miserably in that great *Business* of their *eternal* Condition, *viz.* Whether they shall be happy or undone to all Eternity.

'Tis a Question, whether the *Piety* or *Prudence* of that Prayer
of.

of Agar, *Give me neither Poverty nor Riches*, were the greater. For a wise and good Man, in a moderate Fortune, hath all the real Benefits of Nature, and the Blessings of Plenty, that the highest and richest Grandee can pretend to. And that too, without the horrible Danger, and next to impossible Difficulty of his own, and of his wealthy Posterity's ever entering into the Kingdom of Heaven: Which Danger and Difficulty is as certainly part of the Portion of rich Men in this World, as it is certain that our Lord understood his own Religion, and was in earnest, when he gave his Disciples that charitable Caution, against all Desire of Riches, in that very instructive Parable to all wise Men of the Camel's going through the Eye of a Needle, *Matth. xix. 23, 24*. And he who is not contented with the Safety and real Advantages of that holy Man's Choice of

of his Condition, must seek his *Happiness*, if ever he have any, in another World; for *Providence* it self can provide no better for him in this.

[*Peace of Conscience* is a thing so highly *valuable*, and the Loss of it so very *dreadful*, that it may pass not for a Part, but for the *Whole* of a Man's *Felicity* in this Life; such a spreading universal *Influence* has it upon all his Thoughts, Actions, and Affections. For what can a Man truly *enjoy* while he *wants* it? And what can he *much* feel the *Want* of, while he *enjoys* it? Since he carries his acquitting, *absolving Sentence* within him, and hath a Transcript of the *Pardon* of Heaven deposited in his own Breast.

[*Heart*, in the Language of the Holy Scripture, denotes all the *Powers* and *Faculties* of Man's *Soul*, together with their respective *Motions* and *Operations*. And

Treasure

Treasure is a Man's *last End*, or *chief Good*; that principal thing which he naturally and necessarily *intends* in all that he does, thinks, or desires; the *Center*, in which all his *Actions* meet and unite.

Now whatever a Man accounts his *chief Good* or *Treasure*, so as to suffer it to *engross* and take up all his *Thoughts* and *Desires*, that he makes his God; that he *deifies* and *adores*, whether he knows so much or no: He can do no more, even to God himself, than to *Love Him*, *Trust in Him*, *Rely upon Him*, and give Him his *Heart*; nor doth God require any more; for it is a Man's *All*. And God sets no other Price upon *Heaven*, *Glory*, and *Immortality*; nay, upon *himself* too, but our *Love*.

God hath so ordered the great *Business* of Mens eternal *Happiness*, that their *Affections* must first *take Possession* of those glorious *Mansions* for them: And that no
Man

Man shall ever *come* to Heaven himself, who hath not *sent* his *Heart* thither before him.

[He is an happy Man, who hath no *Enemy*; but he is much happier, who hath *never so many*, and can *pardon* them. I do not *compare* him who *forgives* and *doth good* to his *Enemies*, saith the *Roman* Orator, to the *greatest*, the best, and the wisest of *Men*; but I *judge* him to be *like to God* Himself.

[The Holy Spirit always *instructs* and guides before He *saves*; and as he brings Men to *Happiness*, only by the Way of *Holiness*; so he never leads to true *Holiness* but by the Paths of *Knowledge*.

Prevention of Sin is one of the greatest *Mercies* that God can vouchsafe a Man in this World.

[The *Foolishness* of worldly *Wisdom* appears in this, namely, that a Man, by following its *Principles*, pitches upon that for
his

his *End*, which no way suits his Condition; for *nothing* can make a Man *happy*, but that which both *shall last* as long as he *lasts*, and which also is so *suitable* to a rational *Nature*, that it can fill the Measure of its *Desires*: But let a Man *have* never so much of this *World*, he is still *desiring* something or other *more*.

He who can *digest* any Labour, *undergo* any Hardship, rather than *die*, must, if he be in his Wits, *refuse* no Labour, no Hardship, rather than *commit* any *Sin*, and be *damm'd* for it.

Nothing *less* than that which will *fit* a Man for *Death*, can *fit* him for the *Sacrament* of the Lord's-Supper.

[To *pray by the Spirit*, signifies neither more nor less, but to *pray knowingly*, heartily, and *affectionately*, for such Things, and in such a *Manner*, as the *Holy Ghost* in Scripture either *commands* or allows of.

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Every

Every *Believer* lives upon an inward *Provision* of Comfort, that the *World* is a Stranger to.

[Let the boldest *Sinner* take this one *Consideration* along with him when he is going to *sin*, That in every deliberate, wilful *Sin*, he casts *Lots* for a whole *Eternity*; and, which is yet much more dreadful, makes it ten to one odds against him, viz. That everlasting Punishment will be his *Portion*.

Sin can please no longer, than for that pitiful *Space* of Time while it is committing; and surely the present *Pleasure* of a sinful Act, is a poor Countervail for the *Bitterness* of the *Review*, which begins where the Action ends, and lasts for ever.

When Christ shall compare *Himself*, who was denied, and the *Thing* for which he was denied together; and shall parallel his *Merits* with a *Lust*, and lay a whole *Eternity* of Happiness in the

the *Ballance* with a *Trifle*, then the *Folly* of the Sinner's *Choice* shall be the greatest *Sting* of his *Destruction*.

[We all know that this short uncertain *Life*, is only a *Passage* to an *endless State* of Happiness or of Misery; and therefore it ought to be in all Reason a *careful* and a constant *Preparation* for a Blessed *Eternity*.

How deplorably wretched and *foolish* then are all those, who either lay out all that *Time* which God gave them chiefly for this great *End*, upon such poor *Projects* as reach no farther than this short and miserable *Life*; or who make it their *Business* to forget *God* and themselves, by mispending their whole *Lives* in those mean *Diversions*, *Sports*, and *Pastimes*, or in vicious or useless *Conversations*, which are the Devil's great *Engines* to fence out *thinking*, and to keep Men in

a fottish *Ignorance* of the *Danger* they are in, of being lost and *undone for ever*?

For the *Knowledge* of a Man's true *State*, in relation to the *Life* to come, and that *Self-Inspection* and *Self Examination*, whereby only such *Knowledge* can be obtain'd, is a *Duty* of so mighty an *Influence* upon all that concerns his *immortal Soul*, that it is indeed the very *Root* and *Ground-work* of all true *Repentance*; and the necessary *Antecedent*, if not also the *direct Cause*, under, or in *Conjunction* with the *Spirit* and *Grace* of God, of a *Sinner's Return* to God.

[The next and most effectual *Way* to *destroy Religion*, is to embase and *villify* the *Teachers* and *Dispensers* of it. But surely the *Bottom* and *Foundation* of this *Behaviour*, towards Persons *set apart* for the *Service* of God, that this very *Relation* should entitle them

them to such a peculiar *Scorn*, can be nothing else but *Atheism*, *Infidelity*, and *Profaneness*, the growing rampant *Sins* of these *Times*.

If there were not a *Minister* in every *Parish*, you would soon find Cause to increase the Number of *Constables*. And if the *Churches* were not employed to be *Places* to hear God's Laws in, there would be need of them to be *Prisons* for the Breakers of the Laws of Men.

[The *Christian Religion*, is nothing else but the *purifying* and *refining Nature* by *Grace*; the raising and *exalting* our *Faculties* and *Capacities* by *Wisdom* and *Virtue*.

Religious Perfection therefore is nothing else but the *moral Accomplishment* of *Human Nature*: Such a *Maturity* of *Virtue* as *Man* in this *Life* is *capable of*; or a confirmed, well-established *Habit* of *Righteousness*, and true *Holiness*.

Now, as it is the main *Design* of the *Gospel* to raise and exalt us to this *Habit* of *Holiness*, so it receives no small *Accession* to that *Strength*, *Easiness*, and *Pleasure*, which are natural to *Habits*, from the *Supernatural Energy*, and *Vi-gour* of the *Holy Spirit*.

[According to this Notion of *Religious Perfection*, he is a *perfect Man*, whose *Mind* is pure and vigorous, and his *Body* tame and obsequious; whose *Faith* is firm and steady, his *Love* ardent and exalted, and his *Hope* full of *Assurance*; whose *Religion* has in it that *Ardor* and *Constancy*, and his *Soul* that *Tranquillity* and *Pleasure*, which bespeaks him a *Child* of the *Light* and of the *Day*, a *Partaker* of the *Divine Nature*, and raised above the *Corruption* which is in the *World* thro' *Lust*.

[This is the utmost *Perfection* *Man* is capable of in this *Life*, to have his *Mind* enlighten'd, and
his

his *Heart* purified : and to be informed, *acted*, and influenced by *Faith* and *Love*, as by a *vital Principle* ; and all this is *essential* to *habitual Goodness*, or that *Holiness* which the *Gospel* requires.

Those *Myssical Writers*, who seem to have more *Light* as well as *Heat*, than other Men, do rightly enough make *Perfection* to consist in that *Holiness* which begins in the *Fear*, and is consummate in the *Love* of God ; which enlightens the *Mind*, and purifies the *Heart*, and fixes and unites *Man* to his Sovereign *Good*, that is, to *God*.

Religious *Perfection* then, is not to be placed in fantastick *Speculations*, or in voluntary *Observances*, but in the solid and useful *Virtues* of the *Gospel* ; in the Works of *Faith*, the Labour of *Love*, and the Patience of *Hope* ; in the *Purity* and *Humility* of a Child of *Light* ; in that

Constancy and *Magnanimity*, which becomes one who hath brought the *Body* into Subjection, and hath set his *Affections* on *Things* above.

[He who *finds* in himself little or no *Hunger* and *Thirst* after *Righteousness*, no earnest *Desire* and *Care* to *obtain* that settled confirmed *Habit* of *Holiness*, of which all are capable; or to *grow* and *improve* in the *Love* of *God*, and of his *Neighbour*; in *Faith* and *Hope*, in *Purity* and *Humility*, &c. hath too much *Reason* to suspect his *Want* of that *Sincerity*, which is the first *Step* towards *Perfection*; and *without* which he is not yet in a *State* of *Grace* and *Salvation*.

For, how is it possible that such *Indifference*, *Coldness*, and *Unconcernedness* in a *Matter* of so vast *Moment*, can consist with a firm *Belief* and *Expectation* of a *Crown* of *Glory*, with a sincere *Love* of *God*

God above all, and with an ardent *Desire* to *please* him in all Things?

[*Great* and *invaluable* are the blessed Effects or *Advantages* of religious *Perfection*: It advances the *Honour* of the true God, and of his Son Jesus, in the *World*; it promotes the *Good* of *Mankind*; it produces in the perfect *Man*, a full *Assurance* of eternal *Happiness* and *Glory*; and consequently, it puts him in *Possession* of true *Happiness* in this *Life*.

The *Assurance* he may have of his future *happy State*, depends,
 1. Upon a *Divine Revelation*, viz. That they who *believe* and *repent* shall be *saved*. 2. Upon the *Application* of the *Condition* of *Life* to his own *particular Case*; of which he may be assured by an *impartial Examination* of himself, 2 *Cor.* xiii. 5. 1 *Jo.* xi. 3. And,
 3. Upon the *Testimony* of the Holy *Spirit*, which, as it *assists* him in

the *Examination*, so it *ratifies* and *confirms* his *Sentence* by its *Suffrage*, fortifying his *Assurance*, and increasing his *Joy*.

[If his *Faith* stands firm against all the *Shocks* of *carnal Objections*; if he earnestly *desires* to please God, as *loving* Him above all Things; if he *thirsts* more after the *Consolation* of the *Spirit*, than after that of *sensible* Things; if his *Soul* is *carried* upwards frequently on the *Wings* of *Faith* and *Love*, and maintains a constant *Conversation* with *Heaven*, *longing* to be *delivered* from the *Body* of *Death*, and to *enter* into the *Regions* of *Peace* and *Life*; if his *Hunger* and *Thirst* after *Righteousness* be very *eager*, and the *Contempt* of *worldly* Things *real*, he may then safely conclude that he is a *Partaker* of the *Divine Nature*, and hath *escaped* the *Corruption* that is in the *World* through *Lust*.

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The perfect Man may be also well assured that he shall *persevere* in that good *Estate* he is now in, by a due *Consideration* of the *Pro-pension* and *Favour* God bears to his *Children* ; of the *Sufficiency* of Divine *Assistance*, and of the *Con-science* of his own *Sincerity* and *Integrity*.

[As to the *Happiness* attainable in this *Life*, the sincerely religious Man hath many *Advantages* over the *Sinner*, or the *less perfect* ; he is more free from those *Mistakes and Errors*, from those *Passions and Follies*, which embroil human *Life*. He reaps that *Satisfaction* and *Tranquillity*, from the *Moderation* of his *Desires* and *Affections*, which *Ambition* and *Avarice* do in vain promise themselves from *Preferments*, or the Increase of *Wealth*. He hath *Pleasures*, to which the *Sinner* is an utter *Stranger*. To be the *Care*, the *Delight*, the *Love* of an
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Almighty God, who is the Fountain of all Good; Lord! What Rest, what Joy, what Confidence, what Extasy do these Thoughts breed!

[Acts of Wisdom and Charity, the Contemplation of Truth, and the Love of Goodness, are the most natural and delightful Exercise of the Mind of a good Man. This wise Man forming a true Estimate of the Objects of Sense, as low, and short, and momentary; and not looking upon them as his ultimate End, nor of any great Concern to him, innocently enjoys all that is good in them, and is not fool'd by an Expectation of more.]

But the proper Fruit of Perfection, and that which is the truest and greatest Pleasure, and the richest Ingredient of Human Happiness in this Life, is Assurance; Assurance of the Pardon of Sin, Assurance of the Divine Favour, Assurance

Affurance of *Immortality* and *endless Glory*.

['Tis most certain, that Christian Perfection *derives* it self from *Heaven*; and that the *Seed* of it is the *Grace* of God; and yet both the *Gospel* and the *Experience* of the best Men *teach* us, that 'tis not only a *Work* of *Time*, but the Effect of much *Labour*, *Self-denial*, *Resolution*, and *Constancy*: We must *watch* and *pray*, *contend* and *persevere*, and that *long too*, before we can *attain* it.

The two general and immediate *Instruments*, as of *Conversion*, or *Regeneration*, so of *Perfection* too, are the *Gospel* and the *Holy Spirit*: We ought to *value* the one above all *Books*, and to *depend* on the other as the best *Guide*.

[The natural Effect or *Fruit* of holy *Meditation*, *Prayer*, frequently receiving the *Holy Sacrament*; and of the prudent *Discipline*, by
which

which we may *subdue* the *Pride* of the *Heart*, and reduce or *command* the *Appetites* of the *Body*, are the *quicken*ing and *enliven*ing the *Conscience*; the *fortify*ing and *confirm*ing our good *Resolutions*; and the *rais*ing and *keep*ing up an holy and *heavenly Frame* of Spirit.

[An *Habit*, or the *constant* and *conscientious Practice* of *Piety* and *Virtue*, gives a Man great *Confidence* towards God: It *ming*les *Joy* and *Pleasure* in all his *Addres*ses to Him; it *purif*ies and *enlight*ens the *Mind*; and *entit*les him to more plentiful *Measures* of *Grace*, and higher *Degrees* of God's *Favour* here, and of *Glory* here-after.

The great and most *important*, the most wonderful and *glorious Truths* of the Gospel, if duly *consider*ed, cannot but *affect* us, and that thoroughly; unless *Sensual*ity, *Pride*, or *Avarice*, and that *Infidel*ity from which they
spring,

spring, and which they nourish and increase, have rendered us brutishly stupid, and impenetrable; wilfully deaf and blind, not only to the Remonstrances of good Sense and of Reason, but even to the Word and Spirit of God.

[Human Perfection consists in the Improvement and Accomplishment of the Understanding, Will, and Affections. Illumination, is the Perfection of the Understanding; Liberty, of the Will; and Zeal, of the Affections.

The Knowledge of our Duty, and of our Obligations to it, which is Illumination; the subduing our Lusts and Passions, that we may be enabled to perform it, which is Liberty; and not only a free, but a warm and vigorous Prosecution of our Duty, which is Zeal; are all necessary to constitute that firm Habit of Righteousness, which we call Religious Perfection.

[Humility

[*Humility*, founded upon the *Consideration* of the best Man's *past Sins*; of his *Slips* and *Deficiencies* in his best *State*; and of his continual *Dependance* upon God, must begin and *complete* religious Perfection: It must *accompany* the Christian in every *Stage* of his spiritual *Progress*; It must *crown* all his *Actions*, and *add* that Beauty and *Excellency*, that *Grace* and *Lustre* to all his other *Virtues*, which is altogether *necessary* to render them *acceptable* to God.

[*Illumination* is a *State of Knowledge*, consisting in the *abolishing* or *relinquishing* those *Errors* which *deprave* and pervert our *Affections*, and undermine and *supplant* the *Empire* and *Authority* of *Reason*; and in *entertaining* and embracing those *Truths* which *purify* the one, and *restore* and *establish* the other; and this in order to *entitle* us to the *Favour* of God, and a *blessed Eternity*.
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Those illuminating *Truths* which we find in the Holy Scriptures, *purify* us; *nourish* and *strengthen* us; *entertain* and *delight* us; and *procure* us a glorious Reward.

The *Knowledge* of our selves, an intimate *Acquaintance* with all our natural *Propensions* and *Infirmities*, is no inconsiderable *Part* of *Illumination*.

For we shall never *address* our selves heartily to the *Cure* of a *Disease*, which we *know nothing* of; or to the *rectifying* any *Inclination*, till we are thoroughly *convinced*, that 'tis *irregular* and *dangerous*.

[There is no such powerful *Antidote* against *Sin*, nor *Spur* to Holy *Industry*, as Holy *Pleasure*, pious *Joy*, or spiritual *Peace* and *Tranquillity*. This is a partaking of, and *anticipating* the *Powers* of the *World* to come.

This illuminating *Knowledge* must be deeply rooted; the *Grounds*
on

on which it stands well *consider'd* and *examined*; that it may be properly *Faith*, not *Opinion*, or *Credulity*: It must be *distinct* and clear (not *obscure* and confused) *form'd* in the *Mind* by serious, frequent and *devout Study* and *Contemplation*: It must be rendered powerful and *operative*; and by holy and long *Meditation*, in a Manner *incorporated* with our *Souls*, and *influence* our whole *Lives*.

[This *Illumination* sets the whole *Man*, and the whole *Life* right; it *fixes* our *Affections* on their proper and natural *Object*; and directs all our *Actions* to their true *End*; it is continually *exciting* in us *wise Desires*, and excellent *Purposes*; always *alluring* us towards our *sovereign Good*, and *detering* us from *Sin* and *Death*: It *disperses* all our *Fears* as well as *Errors*; and *creates* an unspeakable *Calm* and *Tranquillity* in the

the *Soul*. So that a *Man*, who hath this *Light* within him, will never be at *Rest*, till it be either *extinguished* or obeyed.

[*Humility*, *Impartiality*, or *Sincerity*, and a *Thirst* after, or *Love* of *Truth*, are *Qualifications* previously necessary to *Illumination*.

Deliverance from a State of *Bondage* and *Wrath*, the *Peace* of *God*, the *Love* of *Jesus*, the *Fellowship* of the *Holy Ghost*, the *Immortality* of the *Soul*, the *Resurrection* of the *Body*, the *Perfection* and *Blessedness* of *Eternity*: Good *God*! What surprising, what ravishing *Themes* are these, for the *Thoughts* of an enlightened *Soul* to dwell upon?

[He secures the *Freedom* of his *Judgment* sufficiently, who guards his *Reason* against the Force of groundless *Prepossessions*, and senseless *Modes* and *Customs*; against the *Lusts* of the *Body*, and the *Prejudices* of *Parties*; who keeps

a *strict Eye* upon the *Motions* and *Tendencies* of his *inferior Nature*; who *admits* not the *Dictates* of a *single Person*, or of a *Party*, for *Catholick Reason*; and who *judges well* of *Times* and *Men*, ere he pay much *Deference* to *Authority*.

[In order to attain this *Illumination*, we must *apply* our selves, with a great and sensible *Concern*, to the *Study* of the *Truths* of the *Gospel*: We must *act* conformably to those *Measures* of *Light* which we have already *attain'd*; We must *pray* for the *Assistance* of God's *Grace*, and his *Holy Spirit*.

Credulity, *Precipitation*, and *Confidence*, are irreconcilable *Enemies* to *Wisdom*: *Love* of the *Truth*, *Diligence*, *Industry*, *Care*, and *Devout Meditation*, are its best and greatest *Friends*.

[Christian *Liberty* is our *Subjection* to *Reason* enlightned by *Revelation*: It *supposes* and includes a *clear unbiaſſed Judgment*,
and

and a Power, and Capacity of acting conformably thereto: 'Tis the just and natural Dominion of the Mind over the Body, subduing our corrupt Affections, and delivering us from the Slavery and Bondage of Sin.

21 He that committeth sin, saith our Lord, John viii. 34. is the servant of sin; and, if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed, Ver. 36. And Ver. 31, 32. If you continue in my word, ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. By the Spirit and the Doctrine of Christ received and obeyed, we are rescued from the Servitude of Lust and Error, and are set at Liberty to work Righteousness. St. Paul describes the Bondage of a Sinner, Rom. vii. and the Liberty of a Saint, Rom. viii. And Rom. vi. 22. he describes Christian Liberty by our being made free from sin, and becoming the servants of God, and having our fruit unto holiness. And

And the *perfect* Man being now a *new Creature* transform'd into a *new Nature*, that is, moved by new *Affections*, raised and fortify'd by new *Principles*, animated by a *Divine Energy* or *Assistance*, and seeing all Things by a *truer* and brighter *Light*, will (as it is in other Habits) with *Ease* and *Pleasure* follow that *Spirit*, and obey those *Affections* which now reign and rule in him.

[The blessed Fruits of this *Christian Liberty* are, the great *Happiness* of being *delivered* from *Sin*, which is the *greatest Evil*: *Liberty*, or *Propensity*, and *Inclination* to all *good Works*; being thereby brought into a near *Relation* to *God*, as being his *Servants*, and his *Children*; and the *Assurance* of the *Inheritance* of *Eternal Life*.

[*Sin* is founded in the *Subversion* of the *Dignity*, and *defacing* the *Beauty* of *human Nature*; it consists in the *Darkness* of our

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Understanding, the Depravity of our Affections, and the Feebleness and Impotence of the Will. And as it alienates our Affections from God here, so it must certainly exclude us from his Presence and his Favour for ever.

[The Atheist and impenitent Sinner hath as much Contempt for his own Safety and Happiness, as he hath for Reason and Religion, for God and Providence.

[When Nature is renewed by the Grace of the Gospel, and set free from the usurped Power of original Corruption, false Principles, and vicious Customs, the Works of Righteousness are properly and truly the Works of our Nature; and then to do good to Men; and to love and serve God, and to offer up our Prayers and Devotions to Him, is to gratify the strongest and most delightful Inclination we have.

[Selfishness,

[*Selfishness, Sensuality, and the Love of the World*, are the three great *Principles* or Sources of all *Wickedness*; they are wholly *inconsistent* with that *Sobriety* and *Temperance*, or with that wise and good *Government* of our *Actions*, and of our *Affections*, in lawful *Instances*, which we owe to our *selves*; with that *Truth, Justice, and Charity*, which we owe to *Men*; and with that *Love and Fear*, with that *Dependance, Resignation, and Devotion*, which we owe to *God*; from whom they do sacrilegiously *steal* away and alienate our *Minds*, and *set up* other *Gods*, our *Lusts* and our *Follies*, in his room.

[Tis the highest *Prerogative*, the greatest *Honour* and Advantage we can derive from *Nature* or from *Grace*, to be *capable* of, and to be entirely *devoted* to the Service of our Sovereign Lord and Creator, and of our most merciful Redeemer.

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To serve God, is to *love* what is infinitely *lovely*; to *follow* the Conduct of infinite *Wisdom*; to repose our *Confidence* in, or on that *Being*, whose *Goodness* is as boundless as his *Power*: 'Tis to *pursue* the great End of our *Creation*, to *act* consonantly to the *Dignity* of our *Nature*, and to the Dictates of enlightned *Reason*: and to *secure* to our selves the utmost Degree of *endless Happiness* and *Glory* that *created* Beings are *capable of*.

[*Original Righteousness* consists in the due *Subordination* of the *Body* to the *Soul*, and of the *Soul* to *God*: and *original Corruption*, which all Men own, (how much soever its *Guilt* or *Sinfulness*, and its *Effects* in *Eternity*, are controverted) consists in the *Subversion* of this *Order*. The *Cure* of this *Corruption* then must consist in the re-establishing this due *Subordination*. This must be done by *diminishing*

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minishing the Strength and Authority of the Body, and laying Restraints upon its Appetites by all rational Methods; and by increasing the Authority of the Mind, and fortifying it; partly by the Light of the Gospel, and the Grace of the Holy Spirit; and partly by accustoming the Mind to retire, and to withdraw it self, sometimes from the Body.

The Preference given to the Cares and Appetites of the Body, or to those of the Mind, is the distinguishing Character which constitutes and demonstrates Men either Holy or Wicked. They that are of the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; and they that are of the spirit, the things of the spirit, Rom. viii. 5.

['Tis the Work of the Holy Spirit to repair, in some Degree at least, the Ruins of the Fall; to rectify Nature, to improve our Faculties; and to imprint in us
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the divine *Image*. *Meditation*, and *Prayer*, and a careful *Conformity* to the *Divine Will*, are the proper Means to *obtain* and increase the *Grace* of the Spirit; *Negligence* and presumptuous *Wickedness* grieve and *extinguish* it.

The *Doctrines* of the Gospel, if thoroughly *imbibed*, can and will effectually *raise* us up above a State of *Nature*, and will *free* us from the *Power* and Prevalence of our *original Corruption*.

This *Conquest* over our original Corruption, *raises* Man to the *highest Pitch* of Perfection, that our *Nature* is *capable* of: It makes him approach the *nearest* that *Mortality* can do, to the Life of *Angels*: It gives him an uninterrupted *Assurance* of Mind, and a perpetual *Calm* within.

[To mistake a *Nature* contracted from false *Principles*, foolish *Custom*, a careless *Education*, and *Love* of the *World*, for *natural*

Corruption, and their own *Faults* for *unavoidable* ones, is a fatal *Error*, which not only *continues* Men in their *Vices*, but *gives them Peace* in them too, to their *Lives End*.

Tho' much *less* than *Habitual Goodness* may constitute a Man in a *State of Grace*, yet nothing *less* can produce *Perfection*, or a constant *Assurance* of eternal Happiness, which every Man ought to *endeavour* after all he can : And to *remember* always, that his *Goodness* ought to *consist* particularly in an *Habit* of those *Virtues* to which he is by Nature the most *averse*.

[*Sins of Infirmary*, all agree, are such *Sins* as are consistent with a *State of Grace*, and with the Favour of God ; from which the *best Men* are never entirely *freed* in this *Life*, tho' they be not *imputed* to them.

These

These *Slips, Failings*, and the *Spots* even of God's *Children*, are distinguished from such *Sin*, which in Holy Scripture generally denotes a deliberate wilful *Transgression* of the *Law* of God, both in that they are neither in great and plain *Instances*; and also in that they proceed from *Ignorance*, or *Inadvertency*, or *Surprize*, and the *Frailty* of our Nature.

[However, every *wise* and good *Man* must often call himself to an *Account* for all such his moral *Defects* and natural *Infirmities*. He must *watch*, and strive, and *pray* against them. He must take Care to *settle* in his Mind the *Habits* of the *opposite Virtues*; and to reduce even his natural *Appetites* within strict and narrow *Bounds*: And after all, to *wash* off the *Stains* of his *Slips*, and Deficiencies in his *Duty*, by a general *Repentance*.

[Presumptuous wilful *Sin*, is a deliberate *Transgression* of a known *Law* of God, tending to the *Dis-bonour* of God ; or to the *Injury* of our *Neighbour* ; or to the Depravation and *Defilement* of our own *Nature* : And every such *Sin* excludes a Man from *Heaven*, and from the *Favour* of God.

To be *free* from the *Dominion* and Power of *mortal Sin*, is indispensably *necessary* to *Sincerity* ; which is the first and lowest *Step* towards *Salvation*.

[*Universality*, *Sincerity*, and *Perseverance*, are the essential and *indispensible Properties* of *saving justifying Faith*. The perfect Man therefore must take Care to be *free*, not only from an *Habit* of any Sin, but also from *single Acts* of deliberate, presumptuous Sins ; one *Act* of which may be *equivalent* to an *Habit* of others. Such are *Murder*, *Adultery*, *Idolatry*, *Perjury*, &c. which cannot be

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committed, without implicitly at least renouncing Christianity; from all such, a perfect Man abstains with Ease, and with Pleasure, with Constancy and Delight.

The perfect Man hath ever a due *Regard* to the End and Design of the *Law*, viz. to the *Perfection* of his own *Nature*, and to the *Purity* and *Elevation* of his *Soul*; and therefore he interprets the *Prohibitions* by a Spirit of *Faith* and *Love*. He enquires not how far he may enjoy even lawful *Satisfactions* in the natural *Actions* of the *animal Life*, and be *safe*; but how far he may deny himself, and be *wise*.

[In order to obtain this glorious *Liberty* and Deliverance from wilful *Sin*, we must be thoroughly convinced of the *Certainty* of the great *Gospel-Truths*, viz. that *there is an holy and a just God, and a Life to come; and Salvation by Jesus Christ to those only who be-*

lieve, and love, and obey him, &c. We must frequently and seriously ponder them, till they have imprinted clear and distinct Ideas or Notices in our Minds. We must meditate on them till our Souls are possessed and filled with an ardent Love of God, of Jesus, of Holiness, and of Heaven; till all our Desires and Passions are converted into, and swallowed up by this Love; and God be our Joy, and our Glory, the Rest and Center of our Souls. We must possess our Minds with a perfect Hatred of all Sin; and particularly of that, to which we are most subject; and fortify them with a firm Resolution to conquer all Difficulties we may meet with in our Way to Holiness, and true Happiness.

We must use all Means to obtain the Spirit of God; and to increase and cherish his Influence. We must pray earnestly, and meditate frequently; we must not grieve the
 Holy

Holy Spirit by any wilful Sin, nor quench it by Security, or Negligence, or sensual Freedom.

[Unfruitfulness under the means of Grace, and in those several Opportunities and Advantages we may have of serving God, and of doing good to Men, is a fatal Error to those many, who seeming to abhor gross Immorality or Wickedness, do yet so little understand the Christian Religion, as to promise themselves not only Impunity, but an Heaven too, in an useless and unprofitable Life.

Unfruitfulness consists either in a Neglect of Duty, which is Idleness, or in a lifeless, careless, unprofitable Performance of it, which is Lukewarmness, Coldness, Formality.

[He, whose Life is wholly spent in Vanity, or in Drudgery after Riches; in Pleasure, or in Business; tho' his Pleasure be not impure, nor his Business unjust, yet

is he *criminal* before God: He hath received the *Grace* of God, and the *Gospel* in vain: He hath *served* no Interest of *Virtue*, or of *Religion*, in his *Generation*; and therefore he will be *scout out* of Heaven, with the *slothful* *Servant*, who hid his Master's *Talent* in a Napkin, *Luke* xix. 20.

An *habitual* *Omission*, and general *Neglect* of *Duty*, *defeats* all the main *Ends* of Religion, which are, to *honour* God; to *adorn* our Holy Profession, and *save* our own Souls; and to *promote* the good of human *Society*; all which can never be *attained*, but by following after *Righteousness*, and by abounding in the *Fruits* of it.

They, who under the *Pretence* of any secular *Calling*, suffer the *Cares* of this *Life* to thrust out those of *another*, are truly idle and *slothful* *Servants* to God, and *Traitors* to their own *Souls*; how industrious, and *faithful* soever they

they are to the *World*. For *Life* is wasted and *mispent*, if it makes not Provision for *Eternity*; and it *matters little* whether it be wasted in *Pleasure*, or in *Drudgery* after Riches.

[This unprofitable *Idleness* is a flat *Contradiction* to Faith, Hope, and Charity; to Fear, Vigilance, Mortification, which are the great and *indispensible Duties* and *Principles* of the Christian Religion; and therefore certainly it must be a *damning Sin*. It not only *terminates* in Sin, but hath its *Beginning* from it too, *viz.* From a brutish *Stupidity*, and affected *Ignorance*; from *Vanity* and *Levity*; from *Sensuality*, or some other prevailing *Lust*: And as to its dismal *Effects*, it robs Religion and the World of the *Service* due to both; it *bereaves* us of the *Pleasure of Life*, which is serving our God, and doing good, and of the *Comfort of Death*, and
sends

sends us down to a *miserable Eternity*.

Every Man therefore should lay to Heart, that a *State* of Idleness, is a *State* of damnable Sin; as being directly opposite and *repugnant* to the great *Ends* of God, both in our *Creation*, and in our *Redemption*. 'Tis an *unworthy* base *Return* to the *Favour* of God, in making us *reasonable* Creatures, and so *capable* of knowing, *serv- ing* Him, and *doing good*; and to the *Blood* of his Son shed for that very purpose, *viz.* To purify to himself a *peculiar people*, *zealous* of good works, which God had ordained that they should walk in, Tit. v. 14. Eph. xi. 10.

[Formality, or *Lukewarmness*, that is, a too *perfunctory* Performance of *Duty*, is the Sin, and will at the last Day be the *Condemnation* of those, who make a *fair Show* of Religion, and yet have no *inward spiritual* Life.

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They generally do observe the *external Duties* of Religion, but with *so little Relish, so much Indifference, Unconcern, and Coldness*, that they are neither *acceptable* to God, nor *useful* to themselves.

To take no *Pleasure* in the things of God; to have no *Designs* suitable to the Excellency and Dignity of our *Nature*, to the *Holiness* of our *Profession*, and to the great *Obligations* we have to God, and to our Blessed Redeemer; to have no *Hunger and Thirst* after the *Kingdom and Righteousness* of God; to make no *Progress* towards our great *End*; to have little or no *Concern* for the *Honour* of God, and for the *Good* of our Brethren, are but too plain *Evidences* of a *corrupt and blind Heart*, and of our being in a *State of Carnality and Death*; tho' our *external Performances* of any of the *Duties*.

Duties of Religion be ever so many, and ever so frequent.

[*Prayer*, hearing and reading the *Word* of God, &c. naturally tend to enlighten the *Mind*, to purify the *Heart*, -to increase our *Love*, strengthen our *Faith*, and confirm our *Hope*: And where we find not these *Effects* in them, we may conclude they are not discharg'd with that *Life*, *Sincerity*, and *Application* of our Souls, with which we ought to perform them.

[*Christian Meekness* and *Humility*, *Poverty of Spirit*, *Heavenly-mindedness*, *Self-denial*, and *Mortification*, are so far from being visible in the *Lives* of many, who pretend to have some *Regard* for Religion, that they seem to have lost the very *Notion* of them. And the *Lust of the Eyes*, and the *Pride of Life*, getting and enjoying as much of this World, and making as great a *Figure* in it, as they possibly can, is the great,
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if not the only *Business* of many of their Lives, who profess to live by *Faith*; and to have their *Hearns* and their *Hopes*, their *Treasure*, and their *Portion* in Heaven, not on Earth.

Tho' we know that the *Love of the Eyes*, and the *Pride of Life*, or *Covetousness*, and *Vain-glory*, an eager Desire of, and Pursuit after *Riches*, or secular *Pomps* and *Greatness*, (which are that *Love of the World*, which is forbidden, 1 John ii. 15, 16.) are Names of horrible Sins; yet those who are most guilty of them, scarce know what the *Things* themselves are, or mean. They do not consider, that not only all plainly sinful *Gratifications* of their carnal and worldly *Lusts* and *Desires*, but the thus setting their *Affections* on *Things* on the Earth, making them their chief *Business* and their *Happiness*; and seeking them with that *Application* and *Deserance*,
 which

which are due to the *Kingdom* and *Righteousness* of God; are wholly *inconsistent* with that *Poverty of Spirit*, with that *Purity of Heart*, with that *Spirituality*, and *Heavenly-mindedness*, and with that *predominant Love* of God, and of our Blessed Redeemer, which are the apparent *Design* and *Ends*, and the great *Lessons*, and most express *Precepts* of the Holy Gospel. And St. *John* assures us, that if any man (thus) loves the world, and the things that are in the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

[The Cure of this fatal Sin of *Lukeewarmness* and *Formality*, which frustrates the *Efficacy* of the Gospel, and of the Spirit, and intirely defeats the great *Design* of the Christian Religion, consists in forming just and correct *Notions* of *Virtue* and of *Vice*; and of the great *Duties* and *Motives* which the Scripture acquaints us with;

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in strengthening and confirming our *Faith*, and our *Hope*, and our *Love* to God; and in *perfecting* and compleating the *Reformation* of our Lives.

[They, who upon an impartial *Examination* by the foregoing *Marks*, find themselves in a *lukewarm* *Laodicean* *State*, ought sadly and timely to consider, that if their *Christianity* be such, that it neither truly *sets them free* from their *Bondage* to the World and the Flesh, nor *enriches* their *Souls* with true and solid *Virtue*; if it neither *promotes* the *Honour* of God, at least by a Christian Life, nor the *Good* of Man in their Station and Capacity; it must unavoidably follow, that *having* no *true Title* to God's *Favour*, nor any rational *Ground* on which to build an *Assurance* of it, they can *reap* no true *Comfort* or *Pleasure* from Religion here, nor any *Reward* from it hereafter; and their

Torment

Torment in Hell will have this peculiar *Aggravation* above all others, that they *fell* into it from the *Hopes* (false indeed and groundless) they once had of *Heaven*.

[*Zeal* is *Love* in the utmost *Elevation* and Vivacity that it is capable of; by it *human Nature* is raised to the highest *Degree* of Perfection, by the *Power* of God's Word, the *Energy* of the Holy Ghost, and the *Triumphs* of Faith, and Love, and Hope.

A *State* of *Zeal*, is that *Holiness*, which is the *Result* of *Illumination*, or *Clearness* of *Judgment*, of the *Strength* and *Force* of *Holy Resolution*, and the *Vigor* of *holy Passions*: 'Tis that solid spiritual *operative Religion*, which may be *felt* by our selves in the *Tranquillity* of *Conscience*, *pious Desires*, and a rational *Assurance*; and may be *discern'd* by the *World* in our *Lives* and *Actions*; it will shew it self in our *Humility*, *Purity*,

rity, Temperance, Moderation, Devotion, Watchfulness for the Good of those under our Charge; and in the Activity and Generosity of an universal Charity.

A State of Zeal, in the Language of St. Paul, 1 Thess. i. 3. is that Perfection or Maturity of Holiness, which abounds in the Work of Faith, in the Labour of Love, and in the Patience of Hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Sight of God, and our Father: In a Word, Zeal is nothing else, but the Love of God made perfect in us, or an ardent vehement Desire to advance the Glory of God by our personal inherent Holiness, and by the Fruit of it, good Works.

[The perfect Man then, we see, is not only set free from the Dominion of all Sin, but he carefully and constantly abstains from any single Act of known, deliberate, presumptuous Wickedness. He must never criminally omit any Duty,

nor

nor deliberately *commit* any *thing* repugnant to it. He must *excel* in those *Virtues* which *Grace* and *Nature* most powerfully dispose and *incline* him to ; and of which he seems to be *design'd* by God, to be an *Example* to others. He must be *eminent* also in those *Virtues* which are more necessary, and *peculiar* to his particular *Calling* or *Station* ; or which any other *Dispensation* of *Providence* he is under *requires* of him. He must be truly *great* in his own *proper Business* and *Affair*, and *shine* with a dazling *Lustre* in his own *Sphere*.

[The *perfect* Man must always *abound* in those universal *indispensable Graces* of the Gospel, *Faith*, *Hope*, *Love*, and *Humility* ; which effectually *exalt* Man above *himself*, and above the *World* ; which *inflame* him with an ardent *Zeal* for the *Honour* of God, and for the *Good* of Men ; and thus *enable* him

him to *surmount* all the *Difficulties* which he meets with in prosecuting his great and glorious *Designs*.

The *perfect* Man will always *cleave* to God with all his Soul; and *walk* as always before him; he will very often *meditate* on *Him*, and on his Works; and he will *contrive*, and *study*, and *labour* to please him. All things will *appear* to him empty and *contemptible* in *Comparison* with God; and consequently he will so *thirst* after the Presence and *Fruition* of God in Heaven, that he will earnestly *desire* to be dissolv'd, and *dismissed* from the corruptible *Tabernacle* of his Body.

[As *Virtue* is the *Perfection* of Human *Life*, so is *Action* the *Perfection* of *Virtue*; and *Zeal* is the noblest *Principle* and *Perfection* of virtuous *Actions*. Now such a *Zeal*, which is fruitful in all good *Works*, is indispensably *necessary* to our own *Security* and *Happiness*;

to the *Welfare* and Good of our Neighbour, and to our *promoting* the *Glory* of God.

The *perfect* Man, whatever his *private Charities* are, looks upon it as his indispensable *Duty* to make his *Light* so to *shine* before Men, that they may see his *good Works*, and glorify his Father, *Matt. v. 16.* in all *publick Contributions* for the *Relief* of Christ's poor distressed *Members*; or for *promoting* any publick *Design*, apparently tending to the *Honour* of his Master, and to the greatest *Good* of Mankind.

And *Experience* hath shewn, that the *concerted shining Example* of a few *thinking Persons*, by an *unusual Liberality*, hath raised a *publick Collection* in a Parish to more than *four Times* what it would otherwise probably have amounted to: which *exemplary Charity* redounds as well to the *Glory* of the *Grace* of God, and
to

to the greater *Benefit* of the prudent and pious *Donors*, as it apparently doth to the more *bountiful Relief*, and greater *Comfort* of those indigent distressed *Brethren* of our Lord who *receive* it.

[As a *happy Eternity* depends upon our *Zeal*, so nothing else can *give* us any comfortable, any rational *Assurance* of it in this *Life*. The Reason is plain, because 'tis *Zeal* that is the *only* unquestionable *Proof* of our *Integrity*; and *good Works* are the *Fruit* which alone can *evidence* the *Life* and *Truth* of our *Faith* and *Love*; *Hereby* we know that we know him, if we keep his *Commandments*, 1 John ii. 3.

Certainly if we love *Holiness*, if we *hunger* and *thirst* after *Righteousness*, we shall never live in a direct *Contradiction* to the strongest *Passions* of our Soul; we shall never *refuse* to gratify an *Inclination*, which is not only *fervent* in

us,

us, but its Gratification will *procure* us eternal *Rewards* too. Certainly, if we *love* God, we cannot but *seek* his *Glory*; we cannot but be *desirous* to maintain *Communion* with him. And if so, do we know any *Sacrifice* that is more *acceptable* to God than *good Works*? Do we know any that he *delights* in more than *Zeal*?

[To *know*, and to *love* God, is our *Wisdom*; to *depend* upon Him our *Happiness* and our *Security*; to *serve* and worship Him, our *Perfection* and *Liberty*; to *enjoy* Him will be our *Heaven*; and those *Glimpses* of his *Presence*, which we are vouchsafed thro' the *Spirit* in this *Life*, are the *Pledges* and *Foretaste* of it.

[He who doth not find *Religion* full of *Pleasure*, who doth not *glory* in God, and *rejoice* in our Lord *Jesus*; he who is not *filled* with an humble *Assurance* of the *Divine Favour*, and a joyful *Expectation*

pectation of Immortality and Glory, doth yet want something; he is yet defective with Respect either to the Brightness of Illumination, the Absoluteness of Liberty, or the Ardour of Love.

Retirement, which is the Prison and Punishment of the Fool, or the eating Man, is the Paradise of the Wise, or the Thinking and the good Man.

[It we entirely depend upon God for our *Happiness*, we shall be passionately *desirous* of his *Presence*, of his *Grace* and *Favour*; we shall dress and *prepare* our *Souls*; we shall awaken and *dispose* all our *Faculties* to receive him; we shall ever *do* the Things which may *invite* and prevail with Him to *abide* with us; we shall be *apprehensive* of his *forsaking* us, as the *greatest Evil* that can *befall* us.

He who sets up to himself for his ultimate End, an empty and

Uncertain Good, instead of a *solid* and *eternal One*, must needs be as miserably *dehuded* and disappointed, as *he* must be, who *sets up* to himself a *false God*, instead of the *true*; or goes about to *endear* himself to the *true God*, by a false and *superstitious Worship*.

[Whoever will be *perfect* or happy, must never *think* that *Religion* can *subsist* without the *Strength* and *Vigour* of our *Affections*; or that the *Bent* and *Vigour* of our *Souls*, can be *pointed* towards God, and yet the *Air* of our *Deportment* and *Conversation* be *earthly*, *sensual*, and *vain*, conformed even to a *Pagan Pride*, and *Shew of Life*. He must look upon *himself* as a *Stranger*, and *Pilgrim* in this *World*; and upon the *best Things* in it, not as *Ingredients* of our *Happiness*, but only as *Instruments* of *Virtue*; short *Repasts*, or *Refreshments* in our *Journey*.

[One

[One chief Reason why those glorious and wonderful Objects, God, a Judgment to come, Heaven and Hell, do strike us so feebly, and operate so little, is, because we have generally no lively, distinct and clear Conception of them : It being otherwise impossible, that Things in their own Nature dreadful, and amazing, should excite in us no Fear ; or that Things in their own Nature infinitely amiable, should enkindle in us no Passion, no Desire.

For nothing can render the most important Truths powerful and operative in us, but such a Digestion of them, by serious and devout Meditation, as may in a Manner incorporate them with us.

The Grace of God, if it be complied with, and obeyed, while it renders us more like God, renders us more dear to him too ; And one Favour, if it be not our

own Fault, qualifies us for *another*.

[To be perpetually *vexed* at one's own *Folly* ; to *commit* those Things which we inwardly *condemn*, and be in continual *Pain*, lest they should *come to Light* : To be always *displeased* at one's self, and *afraid* not only of the *Reflections* of others, but of our own, this is, methinks, a great *Evil*, did no other attend our *Sin*.

But *Fear* is in all, but desperately-*mad Fools*, and Brutes, inseparably joined with *Guilt* ; And *Guilt* not only *damps* the Chearfulness of the *Mind*, and destroys that *Confidence Man* would otherwise naturally have in God ; but also makes him live in perpetual horrible *Dread* of Death, and everlasting *Punishment*.

This is the *blessed Advantage* of *Atheists*, *Scepticks*, and of all hardened *impenitent Sinners*, to stand

stand upon the Brink of *Damnation*! 'Tis a glorious *Victory* to have defeated all the *Means* of *Grace* and *Happiness*! 'Tis an *heroick Atchievement*, to be able to *extinguish* all *true Sense* and *Reason*, as well as *Religion*; and to become impregnable, and impenetrable to all *Arguments*, to all *Motives*, which either the tenderest *Love*, or the profoundest *Wisdom* of God and *Man* can attack us by!

[*To love* nothing better than God, nothing *equal* to Him, constitutes us in a *State* of Sincerity, and so of *Salvation* too. We are farther *required* to aim at, and *pursue* after the *highest* and most perfect *Degrees* of Love; but we are not *bound*, under Pain of *Damnation*, to *attain* them.

The *perfect* Man hath *Grace* and Strength enough to *forbear* all deliberate wilful *Sin*; and I doubt not but that *many* do so. But

the most perfect Men are never *utterly exempt* from *Defects, Failings, and Humane Infirmities.*

[He who *desires* to be perfect, will *avoid* all *Acquaintance* which *infects* us with *Vanity* and *Lightness* of Spirit, which *shews* us nothing but a *gaudy Outside*, and a *frotty Soul*; whose *Example* binds Men in Civility to be *foolish*; and makes *Confidence*, and *Vice*, and *Mispen*ce of Time, a *Fashion.*

[The *Love* of God, is the noblest Fruit of *Illumination* and *Faith*; the true *Source* and Parent of *Joy* and *Peace.* This *Love* is the most pregnant *Seed* of a *Divine Life*; It is the *Principle* that *animates, moves, and informs* the whole *Body* of Righteousness. Love is the *Bond* of Union, and *Communion* with the *Father*, and his *Son Jesus*, through the *Spirit.*

[The *Indications* of an inordinate, too passionate *Love* of the *World*, are, too much *Concern* for the

the *Pomp* and the *Shew of Life*; too much *Exactness* in the *Modes* and *Customs* of it; too quick a *Sense* of *Honour* and *Reputation*; of *Pre-eminence* and *Praise*; too much *Diversion*, or *Study of Ease* and *Pleasure*; too much *Haste*, and too much *Industry*, to grow *rich* or *great*; and in short, a more *apparent* *Care* and *Diligence*, and visible earnest *Application* to the *Things of this World*, than to those of the *World to come*.

Now, tho' such an indiscreet fond *Love* of the *World* may possibly, neither for the *Matter*, nor the *Degree* of it, be great and criminal enough to destroy our *Sincerity*, and so all *Hopes* of *Salvation*; yet it is undoubtedly *strong* enough to *abate* our *Vigour*, and so to *hinder* our *Perfection*, and bereave us of many *Degrees* both of true and solid *Pleasure* here, and of *Glory* hereafter.

['Tis *Zeal*, and *Zeal* alone, that can make *Religion* appear *lovely* and delightful, and reconcile the *World* to it; This alone can adorn the *Gospel*; for it renders *Virtue* more conspicuous, more taking in *Life* and *Example*, than it can be in the *Precepts* and *Descriptions* of *Words*.

The only *Way* to *captivate* the *Mind* entirely to the *Love* and Service of *Religion* and *Virtue* is, to *consider* frequently and seriously the *Rewards* of Perfection, and that *Increase* of Happiness, and Pleasure, which will attend it in another *Life*. And certainly every *Man*, who is *wise* enough to *love* his *God*, and his immortal *Soul*, so as he ought to do, cannot but *look* upon it, as the great and proper *Business* of this short *Life*, to *secure* to himself, through the Mercies of *God* in *Jesus Christ*, and by a *constant Care* to obey and please him in all Things, all the

the *utmost Degrees of Happiness*, which he is capable of attaining to, in that *Life* which will *never end*.

[*Grace*, in the Holy *Scripture*, signifies, 1st, God's undeserved *Love* and *Favour* to Mankind, which first moved him to *create*, and then to *redeem* the World. 2^{dly}, The *gracious Effects* of that Love and Favour, the *Gifts* flowing from it, or that *divine Principle* infused into our Souls by God's good Spirit, raising us up from the *Death* of Sin to the *Life* of Righteousness; that *Participation* of the *Divine Nature*, by which we are made *conformable* to the *Divine Will*; *Gratia dans*, & *Gratia data*.

[*Faith* is a deep and a full *Persuasion* of, and a real cordial *Assent* to all *Truth* revealed in *Scripture*, upon *Account* that 'tis the Word of an infinitely *wise* and *good* God, who can neither

be *deceived*, nor *deceive*; 'Tis the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen, Heb. xi. 1. that is, 'tis such a firm *Belief* as doth give a present *Existence* to Things yet to come, and by *representing* distant *Futurities* in as lively a Manner to the enlightned *Mind*, as if they were before the *bodily Eye*, gives them the same *Power* to excite in us *workings* suitable to such *important Discoveries*, as if what we are fully *persuaded* certainly *must be*, actually *were* in being, and now *present* in our View.

This *saving Faith* presents to our *Hopes* and *Fears*, the great Springs of all humane Action, *Arguments* of such infinite *Moment*, as duly *attended to*, must, by a kind of moral *Necessity*, set all our *Endeavours* at Work, to the *producing* such an *Obedience* as God, for the sake of Christ
believed

believed in and obeyed, will graciously *accept* and crown with everlasting *Life*. Thus are we saved through Faith by Grace.

[Where *Faith* really is, it still *casts out Devils*; viz. every foul and *evil Spirit* that possesses a Man, the *Spirit* of Envy, Pride, Malice, Revenge, Uncleanneſs, Covetouſneſs, Worldly-mindedneſs, &c.

To diſregard God's *Promiſes* of a future *Reward*, is as great an *Affront* to the Divine Maſteſty, as to diſobey his *Commands*; as on the other Hand, to *believe* and embrace what he hath *promiſed*, is as high an *Act* of Religion, as to *do* what he hath *enjoined*.

[God *hath* an equal undoubted *Right* over our *Underſtanding*, as well as over our *Will*: And we are as much obliged to *believe* the Word of God, tho' with *Reluctancy* to our *Underſtanding*; as we are to *obey* his *Commands*,
tho'.

tho' with Repugnancy to our Will.

The Gospel is *rejected* by ill Men, not because the *Objects* of our *Faith* in it are too *obscure*, but because the *Obligations* to Holiness are too *plain*. Nay, there is *nothing* in the World that is *believed*, the *Belief* of which is not founded upon less *satisfying Grounds* than those on which our most *Holy Faith* is built.

[We may *put* our selves out of the Reach of being *disturbed* by any Things, save those only, which *belong* to our *true Peace* or everlasting Happiness, by rightly *judging* nothing on this *side* Heaven *considerable* enough to make us *forfeit* for it our *Quiet*, which is the most precious *Jewel* of Human *Life*.

Is it not a kind of *Hell* already begun upon *Earth*, to live always *wishing* that there is, or were, no *God*, nor shall be any *Judgment*?
and

and yet to be in perpetual *Doubt* and horrible *Dread*, that the one surely *is*, and that the other as certainly must, and *will be*.

Whoever *continues* in any one known and wilful *Sin*, has made a wide *Step* towards his departing from the living God : he doth at least *say in his Heart*, in his *Wishes*, (whether he be aware of it, or no) there is *no God*. To how great a Degree of *Atheism* then, may a Man be *advancing*, before he perceives it ?

[Seeing God allows us all the *reasonable Desires* of Nature, and forbids us only what is *unreasonable* and *unnecessary*, He that *looks* after the Happiness of a future *Life*, doth not *lose* any of the real *Conveniencies* of *this* : But he, who *places* all his Happiness here, cannot *find it* in this World, and is sure to be *miserable* in the other.

To

To the *sincere* Christian, every *Affliction* is a *Preventive* of *Sin*, a *Corrective* of Corruption, an *Exercise* of Grace, a *Conformity* to Christ, an *Evidence* of his being a Son of God, an *Assurance* of his Father's Love, and a *Preparative* for Heaven; He having still those *Joys* before him, in which all his *Sorrows* shall end.

[The Holy Spirit *illuminates* the Understanding of all that *believe*, that they may see and embrace the *Truth*; and *renews* their Will, and makes it *inclina-ble* to the Will of God. And without this *Regeneration* or *Renovation*, both of the *Understand-ing* and the *Will*, it is impossible to have a sanctifying or *saving Faith*.

The Holy Spirit *regenerates* us at our *Baptism*, and then *takes up* his Dwelling in us: But if we grieve and *chase* Him away by those *Sins*, which the Spirit of
Holiness

Holiness and Purity cannot endure to *dwell* with, he will leave us ; and wicked and impure *Spirits* will then take Possession of our *Hearts*.

[To *act* contrary to a Man's eternal *Interest*, tho' it were to gain the whole *World*, at the Loss of his *Soul*, is to *act* against natural *Reason*, as well as against revealed *Religion*, and to contradict *Nature*, as well as to defy *Grace*.

As there is no *Friend* or Deliverer like God, and no *Comfort* like *Hope* in Him ; so there is no *Way* to make an *Interest* in Him, like *confiding* in, and *depending* upon Him. To distrust Him, is the *Way* to lose Him, and together with Him, all our *Happiness* and good *Success*. And we then *distrust* Him most apparently, when we *use* any *Means* not allowed by his *Laws* to compass any *Design* we have.

[The

[The *Ministers* of the Gospel must not *repine* to meet with the same *Usage* as their great *Master* did. They must rather account it as an *Honour* to their *Persons*, to be despised for their *Master's* Sake; so to their *Function*, that they who would *spoil* them of their *Orders*, are the same, who would *rob* Christ of his *Divinity*.

We presume not to set *Limits* to the extraordinary, uncovenanted *Mercies* of God, in the *Case* of those, who pretend not to a *Succession* of their *Ministers* from the *Apostles* by *Episcopal Ordination*; whether they are within or without the *Church*, we judge not; tho' indeed the ancient *Fathers* do, and that on the *condemning* Side: We know that God's *Mercy* and *Grace* can supply all *canonical Defects*, wherever there is true *Faith* and good *Works*. But this we are sure of, that the *Pri-vileges* of being within Christ's
Holy

Holy Catholick Church, which only hath a *Right*, and Claim to the *Promises* of the Gospel, are inestimable; or else they had not been purchased for us, at so dear a Rate as the most *precious Blood* of the Eternal Son of God, and *made good* and conveyed to us by the *Holy Spirit* of God.

[*Knowledge* and *Love* are the most proper and the *noblest Acts* of those our most *noble* and commanding *Faculties*, the *Understanding* and the *Will*, which distinguish the reasonable *Soul* from that of the *Brutes* which perish; and the one of these hath *Truth*, and the other *Goodness*, for its proper Object: Now God being original *Truth*, in so eminent a Manner, that nothing else is *true* but as it is *conformable* to the *primitive Idea's* which are ever present in his eternal *Mind*; and *Goodness* so essential and absolute, that nothing besides is *good*, but
by

by *Participation* of that *Goodness* which is ever streaming forth from his inexhaustible *Fulness*; it unavoidably follows, That to *know God*, is the highest *Excellency* of our *Understanding*; and to *love him*, is the utmost *Perfection* of our *Will*.

Obedience to God's *Commandments*, is the *Perfection*, both of the *Knowledge* and of the *Love* of God; 'tis the *Centre* to which they both *tend*, and in which they both do *meet*. *St. John* looks upon them as *all one*. *He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his Commandments, is a Lyar. But whoso keepeth his Words, in him verily is the Love of God perfected,* 1 John ii. 4, 5.

By that *Knowledge* which God is pleased to *communicate* to us of Himself, He comes into our *Souls*, and gives Himself to us; and we *make* our selves *His*, and *give* our selves

selves to *Him*, by the Means of that *Love* which we bear to Him.

[The *Love* of God, as He is the chiefest *Good*, is a Desire of *Union* with Him, and of *enjoying* the Divine Goodness; but the *Love* of God, considered as He is a *Lawgiver*, is the *keeping* of his *Commandments*. God, considered in the first Respect, is loved *necessarily*, and unavoidably; 'Tis not possible to despise or not to *love* the Highest *Good*, considered as *Good*. But God, as a *Lawgiver*, commanding Things *ungrateful* to Flesh and Blood, and promising *Eternal Rewards* to our Obedience, is then *loved* not with a *necessary*, but with a *voluntary* and free *Love*. Now as Things *necessary*, are not the proper *Subject* of a Command; so when the *Love* of God is *commanded* in the Old and New Testament, it always imports, an actual *Performance* of all God's Holy *Laws*. The

The bare *Contemplation* of the infinite and essential *Perfections* of God, *displayed* in a most lively and affecting Manner, throughout the *Holy Scriptures*, cannot choose but *ravish* and fill a *rational Mind* with inexpressible *Delight*, and *Pleasure*, and *Admiration*; and *enflame* it with an unextinguishable *Love*. But when the *Love* of God is commanded in Holy Writ, as an *indispensable Duty*, in which all *Believers*, even those of the *meanest Capacity*, are alike concerned, it imports primarily and chiefly a settled *Resolution* and *constant Endeavour* to keep all God's *Commandments*.

[These plain Scriptures: *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, as saith our Lord, John xiv. 21. he it is that loveth me. And this is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments, 1 John v. 3. may give great Consolation and Peace of Mind to every*

very true, *sincere*, sober, and *obedient Christian*, tho' he finds not in his Soul such *Emotions* and *Flights*, such *Raptures* and *Extasies* as some fanciful People *pretend* to, and some *mystical Writers* would make the Love of God to *consist in*. If he is *conscious* to himself, that the general *Inclination*, and habitual *Tendency* of his *Heart*, is to *keep* God's *Commandments*; and if he finds the constant *Aversion* of his Soul to the least *wilful Breach* of his Law, he may from *God's own Word*, assure himself, that he both *loves God*, and that he is *beloved* by Him. Our Blessed *Lord* was pleased to *demonstrate* the most *perfect* Love of God that ever was on Earth by his *Obedience*; *That the World may know that I love the Father, as the Father gave me Commandment, even so do I,* John xiv. 31.

[Love

[Love being a *Desire of Union* with the Object *beloved*, towards that End always naturally produces a *Desire of Likeness*, and Conformity to that *Perfection* with which it is enamour'd, and a *Study of Imitation*. It is manifest *Deceit* therefore, and downright *Hypocrisy*, to pretend to the *Love* of God, without an earnest *Endeavour* to be *like* Him. And this none can be, but by *adjusting* his whole Life to those most Holy *Laws* of God, which are not so much the arbitrary *Declarations* of his Will, as a *Sample* of his essential *Goodness* and *Holiness*, the *Image* and *Reflection* of his Divine *Nature*.

As the *Perfection* of Love is Obedience, so is Obedience perfected by *Love*. 'Tis this which must give *Life* and Spirit to all our Performances.

[This holy prevailing Love, will make all our Obedience to
God

God *Sincere*, directing us to the *true End* we ought to propose in all good *Actions*, viz. to please and to glorify God : *Universal and entire* ; since the same Majesty is *violated*, the same Goodness *despised*, and the same Love *grieved*, by every *Sin*, of what Kind, or Degree soever : *Humble* ; since the nearer we *draw* to God by Love, and the more we *see* of Him, the more meanly we shall *think* of our selves : *Cheerful, pleasant, and easy* ; and also *Vigorous and Zealous* in breaking thro' all *Obstacles* which lie in the Way of our *Duty* to that Being, which alone is worthy to be loved : *Constant and persevering*, even under the severest *Trials* and most cruel *Persecutions*.

Now our *Service* to God, being produced by this noble *Principle* of a *Superior*, All commanding *Love*, will naturally beget a just *Confidence*, and a steady *Faith* and

and *Hope*, that the glorious *Reward*, promised to our *Sincere*, tho' imperfect *Obedience*, shall be as *great* as the Gospel teaches, that is, infinitely *greater* than we can either *desire* or *conceive* in this *Life*.

[If we duly *consider*, from how many Terms of *Enmity* and *Distance* God hath *freed* us ; with how many Titles of *Nearness* and *Relation* He hath *endeared* us ; How absolute our *Dependence* is upon Him ; How universal our *Receipts* are from Him ; That we are the *Works* of his *Hands* as we are *Men*, and of his *Grace* as we are *Christians* ; Which Way soever we turn our *Thoughts*, his *Benefits*, we shall find, are so far beyond our repaying by *Deeds*, or Acknowledgment by *Words*, that they are far *beyond* the very *Conceptions* of our *Hearts*.

To

To *confer* the highest *Benefits* which Sovereign *Love* can invent, on those who had justly deserved the greatest *Evils* that Omnipotent *Anger* could inflict; not only to *remove* those from us, but Himself to *undergo* them for us, is so *Godlike*, (for we can say nothing greater) that even of God Himself, whose very *Being is Goodness*, who is Himself *Love*, we could not have conceived or *believed* it, had we not the most clear *Revelation*, and most wonderful and gracious *Experience* of it. This is the highest *Pitch*, the *Miracle*, the *Mystery of Love*. This is that *Love of Christ*, which *passes all Knowledge*, Eph. iii. 19.

[As 'tis impossible to *love* God without *knowing* Him in some Measure, and impossible to *know* Him, without applying our *Minds* to the Consideration of his *Nature* and *Attributes*, his infinite *Power*, *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*.

made known to us, partly by natural Reason, but more evidently in the *Holy Scripture*; so 'tis impossible either to *know* or to *love* God in the least Degree, without *keeping* his Commandments.

Let us all therefore most highly *value*, most earnestly *study*, these Commandments, this *Law* of God, which is the only sure *Guide* to direct our Affections to Him, the only infallible *Proof* of our Love of Him. Let us, like Holy *David*, make his *Statutes* our *Delight*, our Joy, our Riches, our *Meditation*, our *Counsellors*.

[And that Love, that first moved us to *study* them, will receive daily *Increase* and Improvement, by our being conversant in them; and will make us *taste*, and *see*, how good the Lord is, by making us every Day more and more like Him.

And when we shall have such an experimental *Feeling* of the
Good

Good that God is, by doing the *Good* that he *commands*, new Beams of *Loveliness* will continually break in upon our *Spirits*, and attract our *Wills*, till our imperfect *Love* below shall receive *Perfection* above, and our *Exercise* on Earth, become our *Reward* in Heaven.

[The *Christian Religion* is so Spiritual, so *Holy*, so Pure, every Way so *Worthy of God*, so Righteous, so *Charitable*, so Merciful, every Way so *Beneficial to Man*; so *Expressive* of the *Divine Nature*, and so *Perfective* of the *Humane*; that even without the *Assistance* of the open and sensible *Demonstration* of *Prophecies* fulfilled, and of *Miracles* performed, it must needs carry along with it such an *inward* and rational *Conviction* of its own *Excellence*, as to make it appear not only *worthy* of all Men to be received, 1 *Tim.* i. 15. but *such* as by none
 G 2 other

other than God himself could have been *revealed*; being not only a *Copy* of his *Will*, but of his *Nature*; not the Arbitrary *Declaration* of his uncontroulable *Power*, but the very exprefs *Image* and *Reflection* of his essential *Holiness*.

[There is but *one* sure *Way* to know whether the Holy Ghost is *abiding* in us. As the Tree is known by its *Fruit*, so the Holy Ghost. Now the *Fruits* of the Holy Spirit, as St. *Paul* reckons them up, *Gal. v. 22.* are these: *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, (or Faithfulness) Meekness, Temperance.*

If our *Works* are consonant to the *Rule* of God's Holy Word, *savouring* and *tasting* not of the *Flesh*, but of the *Spirit*, then we may assure our selves that the *Holy Ghost dwells* in us, and has *consecrated* us by his *Inhabitation* to be a *Temple* to himself; whom
there-

therefore we ought to worship, to obey, listen to, and never to grieve Him: And withal, to give all possible Praise and Thanks to our blessed Lord and Saviour, for giving us his Holy Spirit to comfort, direct, guide, and sanctify us, and to lead us into all Truth.

[Is not *Socinus* a deplorable Instance of what *oversenseness* to Truth, vain *Pride* of Understanding may, by its natural *Efficiency*, and God's just *Judgment*, bring a Man to, when in express Words *he tells us*, speaking of the *Satisfaction* of Christ; *As for me, if it were not only once, but oftentimes to be met with in Holy Scripture, yet would I not therefore believe it.* And is not *Smalcus*, his Disciple, just such another, who tells us in as plain Words, *That he would not believe the Incarnation, though he should meet with it in express Terms in the Bible?* God keep all of us from such *Blasphemies*.

Socinus *making* Christ such an one as *himself*, would needs be as good a Man as his *Saviour*.

['Tis certainly the *Duty* of all those whose *Errand* it is, *knowing* the *Terrors* of the *Lord*, to *persuade* Men, to keep up a more *awful* and reverend *Esteem* of God's *Veracity*, *Immutability*, *Justice*, and *Honour*, in the *Minds* of Men, than to suffer the *least* *Doubt* to be made, whether, when He, as a *wise* *Lawgiver* and a *just* *Judge*, had so solemnly *enacted* and decreed for impenitent *Sinners* the *everlasting* *Torments* of Hell-Fire, He was in *Earnest* or no.

Even in the very *Declaration* of eternal Death to *Sinners*, God's *Mercy* doth display it self equal to his *Justice* : For *Hell* was not *made* only for *their* *Sakes* who were to *suffer* in it, but for *theirs* also who were to be *warned* and *saved* by it : And it is owing to God's *denouncing*, and their *believing*

lieving *Eternal Punishments*, that many *Saints* receive *Eternal Rewards*.

[The *virtuous Man*, whose *chief Study* it is never to *offend* his good God, cheerfully trusts and *depends* on Him for the *Happiness* of this Life, and of that which is to come. And by this Means makes the *good Things* of this World, which he *thankfully* possesses, and *innocently* uses, yield the more solid *Comfort* and *Pleasure*; and even the *evil Things* thereof, when they fall to his Lot, he *bears* not only with *Content* and *Submission*, but with *Satisfaction* and *Thankfulness* too: As well knowing that he can meet with no *Afflictions* in this World, but what by *right using* them, he may improve into *Blessings*.

[*Justifying Faith*, or the Faith through which we are *saved*, is a Faith working by *Love*; a sound, real and *steady Belief* of those sa-

cred *Truths* which are not matter of bare *Speculation* only, but of such a *Nature* in themselves, and of so great *Concern* to us, as being once clearly *known*, and firmly *assented to*, must needs carry us out to *Action*; without which, the Knowledge or *Belief* of them is of no worth; it is unacceptable to God; it is unprofitable to Men; it is dead. For, as the *Body without the Soul* is dead, so *Faith without Works* is dead also, Jam. ii. 26.

For, *Faith* alone it is that animates and gives *Life* unto good *Works*, by directing their first *Intention* to its proper *End*; by doing them for the *Love* of Christ, and to his Father's *Glory*: by teaching us to expect the *Acceptation* of their *Imperfection* for the *sake* of his perfect *Righteousness*; by minding us from whom they *spring*; and to whom all the *Goodness* in them is to be ascribed; by

by setting a right *Value* upon them; and lastly, by assuring us of as certain a *Reward* to them from his gracious *Promise*, as if they had *merited* it from their own intrinsic *Worth*.

[What was in them to whom the Gospel was first preach'd *bare Infidelity*, in us, who have been born where the Light of the Gospel has so long shin'd, is downright *Apostacy*, as the Apostle here hints to the converted *Hebrews*, whom he therefore calls *Brethren*. For in a *Brother*, i. e. in any one that has ever given up his *Name* to Christ, an evil *Heart* of *Unbelief* is no less than a *departing from the living God*, Heb. iii. 12.]

Every sincere Christian's *Experience* and inward Perception of the *Goodness*, as well as the *Truth* of Religion, is more *convincing* than the most study'd *Arguments*; he is too much taken up in its *Commands*, to have any *Leisure*

to cavil at its *Doctrine*: He relies with full *Affurance* on the gracious *Promises* revealed in Scripture; and finds too much *Comfort* in the *Word* of God, to raise any *Doubts* concerning the *Truth* of it.

Certainly the *glorious* and gracious, the *awful* and terrible *Objects* of our *Faith*, if we duly *consider* what things are *revealed*, and of what vast *Concern* they are to us, are such as *cannot choose*, if heartily *believed*, and actually *attended to*, but produce in us such *Apprehensions* of God and our selves, as to *engage us to the perfecting of Holiness in the Fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. And if we have our *Fruit unto Holiness*, we know the *End is everlasting Life*, Rom. vi. 22.

[Between an *Atheistical Company* of formal *Pretenders to Philosophy* and *Reason* on one Hand, and a giddy *senseless Crew* of *Scoffers*, who are called *Wits*,
by

by the same Propriety of Speech that the former are call'd *Deists*, on the other Hand ; between the grave Arguers against *Mystery*, and the lewd Drollers upon *Priestcraft*, the great *Masters* of Reason, and the little *Slaves* of Sense, the whole Dispensation of the Gospel of Christ, which is the *Wisdom* and *Power* of God to *Salvation*, is almost exploded and laugh'd out of the World, and despised as an absurd and irrational *Imposition* upon their *Understandings*, or a *Trick* or *Cheat* to enslave their *Wills* ; an *Affront* to their *Reason*, or a *Design* upon their *Liberty*.

Now in this open *Defiance* of our holy *Religion* by such foolhardy *Atheists*, *Deists*, and *Antiscripturists*, all those who have any *Love* for their God, and *Care* of their own Souls, will find themselves *obliged* sadly to *consider* the *End*, and openly to *detest* the

the horrible *Impiety* of these desperate *Miscreants*. For they having made *Shipwreck*, not only of *Faith* and good *Conscience*, by their generally *sensual*, and unchristian *Lives*; but of good *Sense* and right *Reason* too, by their seeking *Honour* one of another, rather than that true *Honour* which cometh from God only, *will* not, nay, they *cannot believe the Son* of God himself, as our Lord declares, *John* v. 44.

And therefore these *wretched Men* are by the just *award* of that God, the *Riches* of whose *Goodness*, and *Forbearance*, and *Long-suffering*, they have thus foolishly *despised*, given over to a *reprobate Mind*, *Rom.* i. 24. *that is*, to a *Mind void* of true *Judgment*, and left in the *Power* of that God of the World, who *blinds their Minds*, that they should not see the *Truth* of that Gospel, which they were bred up to the
Know-

Knowledge of: And being thus now the *Children* of the *Devil*, by *imitating* that superlative original *Pride*, which was both his *Sin* and his *Ruin*, they must expect to be condemned to that *everlasting Fire*, prepared for *him* and his *Angels*; with whom they apparently *join Hands*, in making it their *Business* to *defeat*, as far as they are able, the gracious *Design* of God's *sending* his Son into the World, that the *World* thro' him might be *saved*, Joh. iii. 17.

For, if they who *believed not* the *Gospel* preached to them by the Apostles of our Lord, shall not escape the *Damnation* of *Hell*, *Mark* xvi. 16. of how much *so-
rer Punishment* shall those be thought *worthy*, who renounce that *Faith* into which they were baptized, and in which they have been *instructed*, by downright *Apostacy*? And not only so, but professing themselves to be *wiser*
than

than all other Men, they become *Fools* to that Degree, as to set up for *Factors* to the *Devil*, and sworn *Enemies* both of the *Cross* and the *Kingdom* of *Christ*, whose *Blood* as the *Apostle* truly charges them, *Heb. x. 29.* they tread under their *Feet*, using both His *Person*, His *Word*, His *Sacraments*, and His *Ministers*, with the utmost *Scorn* and *Contempt*; and thus also doing despite to the *Spirit* of *Grace*, i. e. rejecting the *Holy Spirit* of *God* as a *lying Spirit*, and his *Gifts* and *Graces* as meer *Illusions*.

[Certainly that *Repentance* and *Sorrow* which springs from a due *Sense* of *God's* great *Goodness* and *Long-suffering*, having been abused by us; and of the *Foulness* of our *Guilt*, and from the *Shame* of our *Ingratitude* to our most gracious *Father*, and our merciful *Redeemer*; and our having resisted and grieved the *Holy Spirit*, must be more acceptable to *God*, than that

that which is chiefly, if not only, *extorted* by the servile Principle of *Fear*, and of pure *Self-love*.

[The *Law*, in Holy Scripture, is sometimes considered as a *Covenant*, sometimes as a *Rule*: when it is spoken of as *abrogated*, it is taken as a *Covenant of Works*; but when 'tis *urged as still in Force*, 'tis considered as a *Rule of Life*: Now Christ hath *freed* us from the Curse of the *Law*, as it was a *Covenant of Works*; *Do this, and live: Fail in one Tittle, and die*: But he hath more strongly enforced our *Obedience* to the *Law*, as it is a *Rule of Life*, Holy, just, and good; commanding nothing but what *God Himself did*, when He was pleased to become *Man*.

[Let us *remember* always, that we are called to be *Saints*, as well as *Believers*; and let us well consider, that it is as possible to be *Believers* without *Faith*, as to be *Saints* without *Holiness*.

Quæſ.

Questionless, 'tis both the greatest *Honour*, and the perfectest *Felicity*, to be like to God: and it is certain, that nothing makes Man so like to God, as *Charity*, or a supreme *Love* of God above all, and such a sincere *Love* to Mankind, as makes us forward to do what good we can to all Men, and to forgive all *Injuries* they do to us.

[Tho' in Matters of *Knowledge* relating to *practise*, the *Will* has no direct, proper *Concurrence*, nor is the *Consent* of it strictly necessary to the *Assent* of the *Understanding*; yet it has such a tacit, but effectual *Influence*, such a domestick, conjugal *Authority*, that the *Understanding* is seldom firmly, or long, on that Side to which the *other Faculty* is not inclined.

[To be in *Christ*, 2 Cor. v. 17. imports being a *Christian*, not only in *Name* and in *Profession*, but in *Truth* and *Effect*. Every sincere *Christian* is in *Christ*, or is
united

united to Him, in a real *spiritual Union*, by the *Spirit* of Christ enlightning, guiding, and dwelling in him: And he is incorporated into his *Mystical Body* by *Faith and Love*, and a constant careful *Obedience* to his *Laws*.

Now every one who is thus in Christ, is a new Creature. He is regenerate, born again, and made a Child of God, by the Word and Spirit of Christ: He is now wholly different from what he was in a State of corrupt Nature: He hath quite different Apprehensions and Notions of Things of the greatest Moment; different Principles and Inclinations, very different Views, and Aims, and Ends, from what he had when he was in Fact, and in Practice, a Child of the Devil, a Child of Disobedience, and a Child of this World.

The Union between Christ and Believers, is on our Part made by
an

an habitual *Faith, Obedience and Love* : And on Christ's Part, it is made by *that Love* which he hath for us, and by the *Habitation* of his Holy Spirit in us, which *transforms* us into the same *Image*, and *consecrates* us into an holy *Temple*, and a spiritual Building design'd for Eternity.

[Our Saviour destroys the *Works of the Devil*, all irregular Desires, Passions, and evil Habits, which reign in the *unregenerate*, by putting a *new Principle* into our *Natures*, which will *diffuse* it self, if not neglected or *resisted*, into all our Inclinations and our *Affections*; and will give them a *new Biass*, new Objects, new Ends and Designs.

Our Lord *enlightens* our Minds by his Word with a new Sett of *Doctrines*; by the *Motives* of the Gospel he puts a *new Spring*, Force, and Life into our *Souls*; by the holy *Exercises* he appoints, he gives us a *a new Taste* and Relish of

of divine Things ; and makes us *conscious* of much other *Hopes*, and other *Joys*, than this World can afford us.

In the new Creature there always is a *predominant Love* of God, which is the *Principle* of all our Actions ; there is a mighty *Preference* of Christ and his *Laws* before all the *Interests* of this World ; there is a general renouncing of *all Sin* or Vice whatever ; and a fixed permanent *Resolution* to follow after *all Holiness*, both in its Extent, and in its Perfection ; and a constant Care and *Endeavour* to work off all our *Imperfections* more and more, and to be still adding fresher and *more lively Touches* to the Image of Christ in our *Souls*.

[This new Creation may equally subsist under all the various *Dispensations* of this Life, by patiently undergoing the *Troubles*: we cannot innocently and prudently,

dently avoid ; and by making a continual *good Use* of all the Blessings of Providence, according to our *best Discretion*, and the *Influence* of that sovereign Principle, the Love of God, by which we are acted ; which *Principle* makes all our *reasonable Actions* true Christian *Virtues*, and gives a pious *Tendency* to the least Indifferencies of *human Life*.

This new Creature is that spiritual and heavenly *Temper*, which God chiefly intended by the several *Revelations* he made to the ancient *Patriarchs*. This was the principal *Design* that lay at the Bottom of the *Law* and the *Prophets* ; and this runs through all the *Articles* and Mysteries of the *Gospel*. Therefore God *created* this World, and afterwards *redeemed* it, that out of it might arise such a *Church* at last, as would *glorify* Him to all Eternity.

[True

[True Piety is the *Fear* and *Love* of God deeply rooted in the Heart, *superior* to all other Passions, *above* all worldly Designs and Actions, continually *exercised* in all Virtues and *Christian Duties*, and persevering through all *Trials* and Difficulties; striving and *overcoming*, and looking forwards, and stretching towards the *Mark*, till it receives a Crown of *Glory*.

It is this holy Disposition, or *divine Life*, which, through the Merits of Christ, can make us Partakers of that *peculiar Glory* which he hath purchased for his *Disciples*. All other *Ways* are meer Pretences and bold *Mockeries* of the Gospel; They are so many Stratagems of the *Devil*, and so many Devices and Plots of *unthinking*, *unwise*, *unbelieving* Brutes of Men, against that *real Holiness*, without which no Man shall see the Lord; and consequent-
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ly against the Life, and the *endless Happiness* of their own poor miserably neglected, and by them so *despised*, tho' immortal Souls.

[The *Change* of our last *End*, and of the *Object* of our *Happiness*, necessarily *infers* the *Change* of all other things in *Morals*. Now every *Man* in the State of *depraved Nature*, is his own last *End*; and the *Love of Himself*, and of the *Creatures*, are his *Sovereign Good* and his supreme *Happiness*; And these give *Law* to all his *Designs* and *Actions*.

But in a State of *Grace* or *Regeneration*, God alone is our *Sovereign Good*; and we place all our *Happiness* in our *Relation* to Him, as He is our God; in our *Dependance* upon Him, and *Possession* of him in some Measure here, by the *Communication* of his Love, and his Favour to us, and in the *Enjoyment* of Him in his heavenly Kingdom. And consequently

sequently hereto, all the *Powers* and *Faculties* of our *Souls*, all our *Affections* and *Passions* are *employed* about and *directed* to this *great End* of our *Being*, viz. so to *serve* and *please* God, so to *promote* his *Honour* and *Glory* in this *Life*, that we may be *happy* with, and in Him, to all *Eternity*.

[*Godliness*, or a predominant *Love* of God *above all*, and a constant *Care* and *Endeavour* to obey Him in *all Things*, is *profitable* unto *all Things*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. i.e. in *all Conditions*, and upon *all Accounts* whatever: Hereby we become the *Sons* and the *peculiar Care* of Almighty God. And consequently true solid *Piety* makes this *present Life* agreeable and safe; our *Conscience* peaceful and quiet; *Prosperity*, (which destroys Fools and bad Men) an *Advantage* for *Promoting* the *Honour* of God, and the *Good* of Mankind, and our own future *Happiness*;

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Adversity and *Afflictions* supportable : It makes *Death* welcome and *happy* ; and the *Joy*s of *Heaven* as *secure* to us, thro' the *Mercy* of *God*, and the *Merits* of our *Blessed Redeemer*, as they are *great* and *endless*.

And on the other Side, by an *irreligious*, *sensual*, barely *animal*, or *worldly Life*, a *Man* not only divests himself of his *Reason*, and *sinks* himself into the *Brutish Nature* ; but he lives in a *State* of *Rebellion* and *Enmity* against the *great Author* of his *Being* and of all *Good*, by setting up his own *Will* in *Opposition* to the *Will* of *God*. And consequently he can have no *Peace* of *Conscience* ; No *Hope* in *God* ; No *rational Joy* or *Satisfaction* in the *good Things* ; nor any *Support* in the *Evils* of this *Life*. *Riches* will undo him ; and *Honour*, and *Power*, and even *Health* it self, will be a *Curse* and a *Snare* to him, by affording him

him greater *Temptations* and more *Opportunities* of *sinning* against God, and *hardening* his Heart from his *Fear*. And he will be as *sure* to be intolerably *miserable* in the next World, as it is *sure* that God is Holy, and Just, and *true* in the *Declarations* He hath made of his *Will* in this Matter.

[The *Christian* Religion obliges us to *live for*, or *to* God only, and to have no other considerable or final *Object* save Him alone. That is, we must make it the *chief Business* of our Lives to *serve* and please God, and to promote his *Honour and Glory*, and to publish his Sovereignty in the World, by making our *Light* to *shine* in an holy and exemplary *Conversation*. And thus is God the great *Object* of our Hopes and our Fears, of our Desires, of our Love, and our Joy, when we *esteem* and openly own Him as our *Treasure*, our So-
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vereign

*vereign Good, our last End, and
our only true Happiness.*

*Thus gain we the wise spending of our Days ;
When our whole Life is our great Maker's Praise.*

[He who hath so very little
Love to God, and so mean
Thoughts of the Joys of *Heaven*,
as to *content* himself with the
lowest Degree of *Holiness*, with
which 'tis *possible* for him to be
saved, (and consequently of *Hap-
piness* too) hath Reason to be-
lieve himself *guilty* of *Insincerity*,
and downright *Hypocrisy*, as well
as of shameful *Ignorance* of the
Design and *Nature* of our Holy
Religion ; Which is, to make us
as *like to God*, as we possibly can
be here ; and as *happy* in and with
Him hereafter, as our finite *Nat-
ure* can bear, or is *capable* of being.

[No Man certainly, who *believes*
the Gospel, and who duly *weighs*
the infinite *Disproportion* which
there is between Time and Eter-
nity,

nity, can make it the chief *Design* and great *Business* of his Life to procure for himself and his Heirs an *Establishment*, as they call it, that is, all he can any ways get of those perishing Riches, which can last no longer than this short Moment of Life.

For 'tis evident, that with a great *Estate* he must entail upon his *Family*, a proportionable *Share* of great and most generally prevailing *Temptations* to Pride and Ambition, to Sensuality, or to Covetousness; (for much ever would have still more) to forget God, and to neglect the Salvation of their Souls. And this dangerous *State* seldom fails, as daily Experience, shews, to engage their succeeding *Posterity* in that broad way which leads to *Destruction* both of Soul and Body.

[Is it then true *Wisdom*, or true *Kindness*, nay, is it not the Extremity of *Folly*, in a Father, to

be more concerned, and to take more Care to lay up for his Children Treasures upon Earth, than in Heaven, and thus to make it *as hard as he can*, and next to impossible for any of his *Heirs ever* to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; that is, into a State of Gospel Holiness in this Life, and of endless Happiness in the next.

Now that this is the plain Case, and horrible Danger of all the rich Men in the World, our Lord most expressly affirmed to his Disciples, *Mat. xix. 23.* in that most solemn Manner; *Verily, I say unto you, that a rich Man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: And the farther to engage their Attention and Caution in an Affair of so great Consequence, he immediately adds, *ver. 24.* *And again I say unto you, it is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of*

of God. And he tells them afterwards, that *this is possible with God only, with whom all Things are possible*, ver. 26.

So that now to disbelieve these positive and repeated Assertions of our Lord, is in effect to give the Eye to eternal Truth : and boldly and foolishly to pretend to be wiser than the Son of God Himself.

No Man therefore would *set his Heart* on the Things here below, and make it his chief Business to *lead* his Posterity into the strongest *Temptations* to that Folly and Sin, if he did heartily *believe* those peremptory Decisions of our Lord, and had *duly considered* how extreamly *hard* it is to have Riches, and not to *trust in them*, that is, not to value our selves upon them, not to make them our Treasure and our chiefest Good, or to *have* a great deal of this World, and not greatly to

love it ; not to have our Hearts there where our Treasure is : And withal how *impossible* it is to be *saved*, if we thus *love* the World ; since we hereby *give* the World such a *Share* in our Esteem, Affections, and Application, as *excludes* the Love of God. 1 *John* ii. 15. *If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him* ; that is, it is then evidently impossible for him to love God with *all his Heart*, all his Soul, Mind, and Strength, as we are most expressly commanded to do, both in the *Jewish* Law, and in the Gospel of our Lord.

[And since great Riches afford both great and violent *Temptations* to that Love of the Things of this World, which hinders rich Men from doing all that Good they ought to do, in proportion to their great Estates, and so from entering in the Kingdom of Heaven. All who *have Riches*, are apparently

apparently obliged in *Kindness* and Justice too, to leave a bright and leading *Example* to their *Posterity* of their being, and having been proportionably to their Abundance, rich in good Works.

They must thus at least endeavour to incline and *prevail* with their *Heirs* too, as far as they can, to be *ready* to distribute, *willing* to communicate, according to St. *Paul's* strict Charge in this Matter, 1 *Tim.* vi. 17, 18. That both they, and their *Heirs*, (in Wisdom and Charity, as well as in Estate) looking upon themselves not as Proprietors, but as Stewards, may consecrate a large Proportion of their great Riches, or Revenues, to the best Use they can possibly put them to, *viz.* To *promote* the Honour and Glory of God the Donor, and to *relieve* the Wants of the Brethren of their Lord, who will either *condemn* or *reward* them, at the last Day, ac-

cordingly as they have *neglected*, or faithfully *performed* this *great* and fundamental *Duty* of his Religion.

This is properly *laying up* so much Treasure in Heaven, both for themselves, and for their Heirs too, by thus entailing a Blessing as well as an Inheritance on such of them as have the Wisdom and Grace to tread in their Steps. And this *studied*, well-stated, and diffusive *Charity*, is also the only sure *Way* whereby they who are *Rich* in this World, can *lay up* in Store for themselves (as St. Paul observes, 1 *Tim.* vi. 19.) a good *Foundation* against the Time to come; that by thus surmounting the great Danger our Lord so truly affirms rich Men to be in from their Riches, they also may *lay hold* on eternal Life, and so enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

[And consequently hereto, all rich Men, who are truly wise, that

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is, wise for Eternity, will, as in a matter of the greatest Moment and Concern to them, most seriously consider, how they may best be able to give such an *Account* of their *Stewardship*, and of the *Improvement* of those many *Talents* they have received, that they may reasonably *hope* to be admitted into the *Joy* of their Lord, at the last great Audit, as having been good and *faithful Servants*. And to this end they will, upon most mature Deliberation, and all things duly considered, consecrate and lay aside such a Part of their Estates or annual Income, to the Uses of Piety and Charity, as they judge may best answer the abovenamed Design, and be accepted by God as such.

And though a *tenth* Part of their yearly Income hath been esteemed a *reasonable Proportion* for their Alms, and other Expences in Works of Piety and Charity, by the Judg-

ment and Practice of *pious Men*, both Divines and others, in those Persons who *had* only such a *Competency* as might be *needful* to supply themselves and theirs with the moderate *Conveniencies* of Life; yet in great Estates, a much larger Assignment (perhaps to a fourth Part, or one Half in some Cases) may be, if not necessarily, at least much better employed than in that extravagant Luxury and Vanity of their Table, and Furniture, and Equipage, which the Men of this World, by a fatal Mistake, think they need all they have to support and maintain; and so do in effect choose to have their Portion in this Life, with the apparent Hazard of being for ever most miserable in the next.

[So generally, (not to say universally) and so for ever deplorably, do those great Possessions, bare Titles of Honour and Quality, and the Pride of Life, or the
Pomps

Pomps and Vanities of this wicked World, and that great (but far from good) Figure they affect to make in it for a very few Years, betray empty and weak, untaught and unthinking Men, into a total Neglect, or perhaps into a foolhardy Contempt of those truly-noble Evangelical Qualities or Qualifications, without which no Man can ever enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now these, we know, are the Love of God and of our Neighbour; Seeking the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness in the first Place, by a due Care to know, and do his Will in all Things; Laying up our Treasures in Heaven, and being, proportionably to our Wealth, Rich in good Works. And in general, all that sincere Piety, Sobriety, that Contempt of this World in Comparison with the Hopes and Joys of the next; that Meekness and Humility and Self-

Self-denial, which are the indispensable Duties of all true Disciples of the Blessed Jesus, to whom alone is made the Promise of eternal Life or Happiness.

[Religion, or Piety, and the Care of another World, is as much our Interest as it is our Duty: 'Tis the Upshot and Result of the best and the truest Wisdom; for true Wisdom consists in discovering what is fit to propound to a Man's Self as his last End, his great Concern, and the most important Business of his whole Life, and by what Means he may attain it; in having great and noble Thoughts in his Mind, and despising petty Designs; in seeing a great Way before him, and being well provided for the future.

Now all this is verified in Religion, more than in any other thing in the World. For here a Man's Mind is taken up with the most worthy, the most divine and
useful

useful Thoughts, and with the sublimest Objects, *viz.* God and Eternity. He takes care to secure his main Stake, the endless Happiness of his own never dying Spirit : He employs himself about things of the greatest Moment and Consequence, and hereby he gives Proof of the greatest Foresight and most solid Judgment, of the Command he hath over himself, and that he is led by his Reason, not ridden by his Passions. And by persevering in this Course, he arrives at that true Tranquillity of Mind, and assured happy State, both in this and the next World, which is the Crown and Glory of true Wisdom.

If another Life, an Hell and an Heaven, are in good earnest believed, and duly considered, Piety will then be the best Wisdom, and Religion the greatest Truth ; Sin will then be the greatest Folly, or rather down-right Madness ;
and

and trifling with God, and with Religion, and with the eternal Happiness or Misery of our immortal Souls, will be the most absurd and unreasonable, as well as the most dangerous, and the most dreadful Things imaginable.

[All they who have the wretched Folly to defer their Repentance, and the Reformation of their Lives, to their old Age, or to a sick Bed, or but even to any time beyond the present, must take these bold and desperate Suppositions all for granted ; every one of which is either false, or at the best infinitely uncertain, *viz.* That they shall live, if not to old Age, at least for some longer Time ; and shall die by a leisurely Sickness : That God will then accept of their Return and Repentance, who never stopt in their Career of Sin and the World, till Death arrested them ; That God will give them Repentance what time so ever

ever they please to prefix to him; or that they can repent when they will.

They who venture their Souls upon Hopes of a Death-bed, or of a Sick-bed Repentance, must farther also most fondly and unreasonably presume, That they shall be fit for the most weighty Affairs, when they are at the last Gasps; and that the most important Business of their whole Lives can be duly transacted, when their Strength and Spirits are exhausted; and to say no more, That it is fit and tolerable for a Man to leave that to be last discharged, which, if any Accident prevent him in the due Performance of it, he is most certainly undone, and miserable to all Eternity.

[But besides that it is infinitely hazardous, unsafe, and of ruinous Consequence to Millions of Souls, 'tis also highly base and disingenuous, as well as sottish for a
Man

Man to put off the Things wherein God's Honour and his Soul's eternal Welfare are concerned, to the very last, as well as great Uncertainty. For such a Man proclaims that he hath more Love for, and more Regard to the poor transitory Things of this short Life, than to that God who made him, and to the Blessed *Jesus*, who died to redeem him from eternal Misery; and that he hath no real Kindness for, or good Opinion of the ways of God, in that he puts the Care of that, which is the proper Business of his Life, and his nearest Concern, as far off as possibly he can; and indeed that he would not mind God or his Soul at all, if it were not for meer Necessity, and Fear of Damnation.

[The true Spirit of Christianity, all the Professors of which Religion are styled the *Salt of the Earth* by our Lord, *Mat. v. 13.* is, and ought

ought to be a Principle of Activity ; they must all look upon it as their Duty to better and to improve the State of Mankind, to have a good salutary Influence upon all within their Sphere, and to do all they can to season and preserve others from all Corruption, as well as themselves.

A wise and pious Christian therefore, will often premeditate his Conversation, and will forethink what Opportunities probably may offer in such and such Circumstances, lest by overlooking them, he lose any Advantage of bringing more Glory to God, or of doing more Good to Men, and so of promoting the Interest of his own Soul.

Not only the Master or Head, but every Man in a Family, is so far at least accountable for the Soul of another, that he cannot be excusable who doth not endeavour to bring those with whom
he

he so intimately converses, and upon whom he hath so many Opportunities of pressing the Consideration of their Duty and Interest, to a Sense and Regard of God, and of Religion, and of their own eternal Welfare.

[He who really believes, and is resolved, by the Grace of God, to obtain the Rewards of well-doing in another World, will cheerfully embrace any Opportunity of performing even a costly or a difficult Service to his blessed Lord and Saviour; nor will he suffer the evil Example of others, or his own Remissness, or any other worldly Consideration, to prevail upon him so far as to make him neglect any such Instances of Piety or Charity, whereby the Glory of God may be most advanced, and his own Comfort and eternal Happiness best secured.

[Where the Doctrine of any Church is found, and the Wor-
ship

ship free from Idolatry, nothing can dissolve the Obligation every Man is under of joining with the Catholick Church, by his Conjunction with that particular Society, or Member of it, where he is placed. Nor can any other thing acquit him from the great Sin and Mischief of Schism.

No good Christian, therefore, will be prevail'd upon by fond Pretences to purer Ordinances, or greater Edification in other Assemblies, to forsake that particular Church in which God's Providence hath placed him; lest by so doing, he lose the Comfort and Benefit of the Catholick Church, which our Lord intended should be but One in the whole World.

Light and Information are at least as necessary as Tenderness, to make a good Conscience. Scrupulous Consciences, with relation to Church-Communion, must first lay aside the Prejudice of their Edu-

Education, together with all spiritual Pride and Pragmaticalness; and then study the Peace of the Church: They must learn to be humble towards God, and their Superiors, and to be willing to regulate their Consciences by the Word of God, and by the Direction of those whom He hath set over them.

[Every one, who either values God's Glory, or his own Improvement and Security, or his Peace and Comfort; and indeed every Man, who makes any Pretence to Religion, must strictly make Conscience of, and charge himself with the constant daily Practice of secret Devotion; for our Lord hath not only commanded all his Disciples to perform this Duty, *Mat. vi. 6 Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy Closet; and when thou hast shut the Door, pray to thy Father who seeth in secret*; but He was pleased also

also to enforce his Command by this Promise and Encouragement,
And thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

None then but flat Atheists, or gross Hypocrites, or at the best, poor, ignorant, and uninstructed Babes in Christ, or careless, unthinking, and Luke-warm Half-Christians, can ever allow themselves in the common and habitual Neglect of this daily secret Worship of God; For no Man can believe there is a God, or at least can have any worthy Apprehensions of Him, but it will naturally put him upon daily Acts of Adoration, of Thankfulness to Him, and of owning his entire Dependance upon God, and of imploring his Grace and Assistance, since He hereby gives the best Proof that he values God's Favour and Grace, and his own Interest in Him, above all Things; and that he esteems the
 seeking

seeking God's Kingdom, and his Righteousness, or the obeying and serving God, the main Affair, and the best Employment of any Part of his Life.

[The Love of differing *Objects*, makes the two *opposite* Cities or *States*: The *Love* of the *World*, or of our *selves*, to the *Contempt* of God, of his *Laws*, of his *Promises* and *Threatnings*, makes the earthly *City*, or *Babylon*: The *Love* of God, to the *Contempt* of the *World*, and of our *selves*, in Comparison with the *Love* we bear to God, and the *Care* we take to *obey* and to please Him, makes the *Heavenly City*, or the *New Jerusalem*.

And according to the *Choice* we now make, such will our *Condition* be for ever: *viz.* either a State of *endless Misery*, in the Company of *wicked Apostate Spirits*, *Haters* of God, and the *Objects* of his just *Displeasure*; or a

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State of *Eternal* Life and *Happiness*, in the *Society* of the Holy Angels, of the Spirits of just Men made perfect, and of our Blessed Redeemer, and in the *Enjoyment* of God Himself, the Sovereign Good, in his Heavenly Kingdom.

Choose wisely now, O Man, that thou be not a self-condemned Fool, and intolerably miserable to all *Eternity*.

[Our growing in Grace, 2 Pet. iii. 18. imports and consists in a more frequent and a more vigorous Exercise of those radical Graces and Gifts of God, which have a Power to infuse greater Degrees of Holiness into all the Parts and Duties of the *Christian Life*.

In order whereto, we must fix in our Minds, by repeated Thoughts and Meditation, a steady lively Faith in God, and in Christ the Mediator of the new Covenant; A joyful Hope and firm Reliance upon the Mercy and Promises of
God

God in the *Gospel*, and upon the *Assistance* of his Holy Spirit; And also a sincere *predominant Love* to our gracious Father, and to our merciful Redeemer.

For the deeper *Root* these fundamental *Evangelical Graces* take in our *Hearts*, the *stronger* they grow in us; and the more we grow in them, the more *strongly* and firmly will they *engage* us in a more uniform and chearful *Obedience* to all God's Laws; in a more *entire* *Resignation* of our selves to his Disposal of us; and in a more constant an earnest *Endeavour* to conform our selves more and more to the *Divine Nature* and Will, which is the utmost *Perfection* we are capable of in this Life.

[The *best* of *Men* are far from thinking themselves at any time *good enough* for Heaven; and they look upon God's lengthning out the *Day* of Grace to them, as an

an Obligation to their farther *Improvement* in Holiness. They very well know, that such their Proficiency, or *Growth in Grace*, is the most considerable and infallible *Evidence* of their certainly being in a *State of Grace* and Salvation, and withal, the best *Security* for their *Perseverance* in that happy *State*, by the Assistance of God's Holy *Spirit*, to the End of their Lives.

[The proper *Exercise* or Employment, and the most important *Business* of a Christian in this *Life*, is carefully to attend to the renewing of his *Mind*, and to endeavour to retrieve that *Image of God*, and *Likeness* to God, after which the first *Man* was made. In this Exercise chiefly consists the Christian *Perfection*: by which, I mean, that a *Christian* is so much more, or so much less perfect in this present *Life*, by how much engaging himself

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more or less *vigorously* in this great *Affair*, he recovers more or less of that *Part* of the *Image* of, and Likeness to God, in, and after which Man was at first created, which may be *recovered* in this present Life.

[Next to *promoting* the Honour and the *Glory* of God in our *Station*, and to our *Power*, the *Doing* the most, and the *greatest Good*, we are able to do to *others*, (and thereby to *our selves* also) is the *true* and *great End* of Man. And consequently hereto, any one who is *conscious* to himself, that he hath done *less Good* than he *might* have done, (and therefore *ought* to have done) in his *Life-time*, may be *glad* of the *Opportunity*, and may be *pleased* with the *Hopes* of *leaving* something *behind him*, of what kind soever, whereby serious and *attentive* Readers may, by the *Blessing* of God, be made *wiser* and

and *better* in some Degree, and in
some Regard, when *he* is in his
Grave.

Earth's vast Extent

Yields no Content :

*No true Peace, nor true Joy dwells there ;
No Rest, no Bliss ; Go seek else where :
In God, who seeks them, ne'er can miss,
True Peace, Content, Rest, Joy and Bliss.*

F I N I S.



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